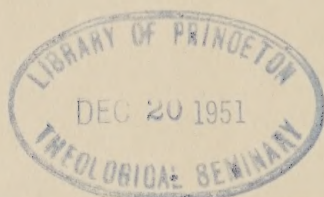


Francis Asbury's Silver Trumpet

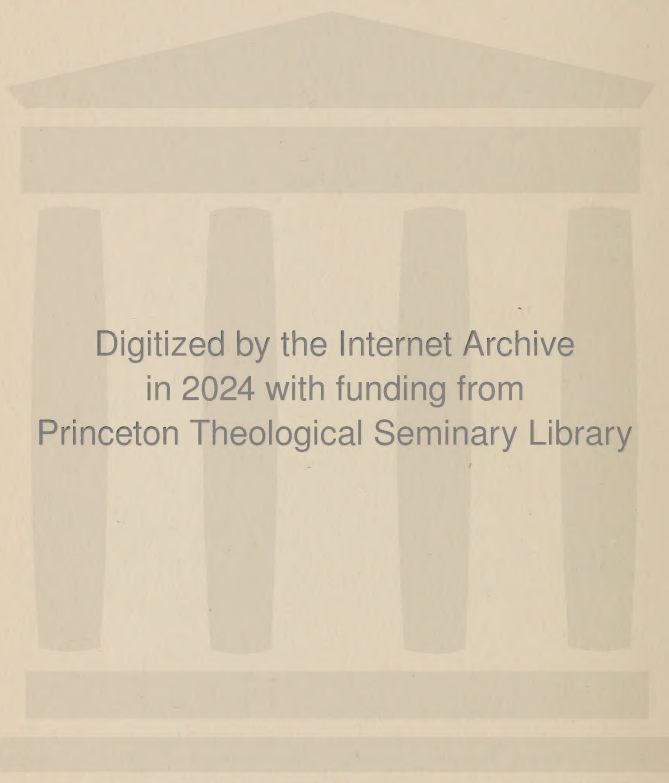
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by

HARLAN L. FEEMAN



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Francis Asbury's silver
trumpet



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FRANCIS ASBURY'S SILVER TRUMPET

By *HARLAN L. FEEMAN*

PRAYERS FOR STRENGTH, COURAGE AND GOOD CHEER

THE KINGDOM AND THE FARM

THE NURTURE OF VITALITY

THE STORY OF A NOBLE DEVOTION

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FRANCIS ASBURY'S SILVER TRUMPET*

NICHOLAS SNETHEN: Non-partisan
Church Statesman *and* Preacher of the Gospel
1769 - 1845

by
HARLAN L. FEEMAN
ILLUSTRATED BY WILL CAIRNS



"his 'silver trumpet' Asbury called him" *

Francis Asbury, The Prophet of the Long Road

—Tipple, p. 171.

FRANCIS ASBURY'S SILVER TRUMPET

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Harlan L. Feeman

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*Dedicated to the memory of a friend of
college days and for the rest of life:*

THE REVEREND GEORGE HENRY MILLER

PREFACE

IT would seem for some reason Nicholas Snethen has never received the full measure of attention and appreciation that he deserves, wherein may be found the motivation of this volume.¹ There are explanations for his being played down in his day and later. He was not a self-assertive, organizing type of individual. He had no driving desire for power and official position. He did reveal rather early in his ministry and leadership an independence of thought and a leaning toward the democratic principle in Church and State. While greatly respected for his ability and charm of person, he was not favored for promotion in official leadership. Bishop Asbury said as much to Bishop Whatcoat. Snethen was never offended by this attitude, nor did it change his spirit of obedience to his superiors, neither did it change his independent thinking.

Then, the heated atmosphere he lived in for two decades branded him a "radical," which led the writers of the history of the church and many church leaders to feel it was expedient not to give him too much notice. The non-partisan endeavoring to keep himself in line with the facts and sound reasoning on matters in hot dispute when people are taking sides is usually at a disadvantage, and is easily placed under suspicion, falsely, and does not receive the recognition that is due.

Let it be clearly understood that this writer has no disposition to revive old controversial fires. The days of belligerent and partisan controversy in American Methodism and elsewhere, let us trust, belong to a past era, while the yearning for unity and good will among the sons of God leads on to the universal Christian brotherhood.

¹ Charles Fellows Eggleston, a lawyer of Philadelphia, gave his library to Westminster Theological Seminary, and in this collection is a copy of Abel Stevens' "Centenary of Methodism." On page 164 Stevens lists twenty of the "great evangelists" or leaders among native American Methodist preachers, beginning with Garrettson. Someone, in all probability Eggleston, wrote a brief footnote in comment on this list: "What studious neglect of Snethen everywhere; the greatest of them all." This incident illustrates the case in point.

FRANCIS ASBURY'S SILVER TRUMPET

Thy justice and the truth agree
In ruling us and those above;
Thy children shall forever see
That all is holy, boundless love.
—Asa Shinn.²

The main purpose in this biographical effort is to make the reader acquainted with Nicholas Snethen. Consequently, there will be considerable quotation of what he said that the reader may judge for himself the manner of man he was, how and what he said, and the spirit and form in which he said it. He had some things to say of interest in this day of international conferences and world councils.

Much of Snethen's writing, especially in the period of the great contention—1820-1830—was anonymous. It was the fashion of the times to sign articles with a pseudonym. This was usually the case with articles appearing in the *Wesleyan Repository* and its successor, the *Mutual Rights*, by the various writers. There was a prudential reason for the use of the pseudonym. One could say things with less offense to others, and escape the penalty of organized opinion against him. Snethen was of the opinion that one could often more objectively discuss debatable matters with less of the emotional element present, when the person was veiled. This was legitimate, he said, so long as you were dealing with issues and principles in the "realm of opinion" not "involving men's lives and characters," then "anonymous essays" would be "infinitely improper."

He used a variety of pseudonyms—Ancel H. Bassett enumerated eighteen—leaning to inventions with a classical flavor; for example, "Adynasius," "Philo Pisticus," "Dokemasius," "P. P." (evidently abbreviated from Philo Pisticus); "Senex," especially when writing to younger preachers. There were several pseudonyms among the Methodist reformers which became quite familiar over an extended period: "Senex" (Snethen); "Martin Luther, Jr." (McCaine); "Amicus" (J. R. Williams); "Bartimeus" (Asa Shinn); "Cincinnati" (Cornelius Springer); "Eusebius" (H. B. Bascom). W. S.

² From a poem by Shinn in *Methodist Correspondent*, February 14, 1831.

PREFACE

Stockton, editor and publisher of *Wesleyan Repository*, in which so many articles appeared in 1821-24, wrote a series of six articles in March and April 1850, published in the *Western Recorder*, which disclosed the names of these anonymous writers. Snethen had previously done this for himself by publishing his book on "Lay Representation" in 1835.

This author is indebted to a number of librarians for their courtesy and fine interest at Drew, Vanderbilt, Westminster, Western Maryland, Library of Congress, Carnegie Institute of Technology, John B. Stetson University, Adrian College, DePauw, University of Michigan, Michigan State University, Michigan State Library, Indiana State Library, Ohio State Library, New York Methodist Historical Society, Indiana State Historical Society. A number of kindly disposed individuals have replied to letters of inquiry, and made certain investigations providing valuable information from Long Island, New Jersey, Maryland, Indiana, Pittsburgh, and Washington, D. C. Faculty members of several institutions have been helpful with suggestions and specific information.

HARLAN L. FEEMAN

Daytona Beach, Florida.
May 1, 1949.

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INTRODUCTION

I

THERE are special reasons for my writing this introduction, apart from the meeting of a courteous request. One is my special admiration for the author—a quiet, cultured preacher who has never sought for a showy foreground but who has maintained a solid background in his achievement and character. So I write in joyful recognition of him.

II

Then I am happy to do anything that will turn the new generation of Methodist people to studying the romance of our history. The records of the accomplishments of our spiritual ancestors would make many moving pictures—whether the films be cast on a platform or on the walls of memory and imagination. The Wesleyan movement has its Oxford side, and the library element in it compelled its early promoters to design saddlebags as much for the carrying of volumes as for the bearing of linen! Of this main fact Nicholas Snethen was a splendid example. He belonged to the self-cultured type—to the group whose minds were set free by the religious impulse. Gypsy Smith used to say that when God converted his soul He liberated his intellect. The passion of a revival in a local church in the modern period always sent several young men and women to college. In a different form that same effect appeared in the earlier time. We do not need to apologize for the mental standing of men like Snethen and Asbury. Their development was not scholastic as to institutions, as was John Wesley's and Thomas Coke's. Yet they became remarkable exhibits of the intellectual life that could be cultivated where the horseback was a study and the wide expanse of a wild land suggested God's works for contemplation.

III

Nicholas Snethen's career is an instance of balanced ministry—in spite of the fact that he became best known for his emphasis on the possible and rightful place of the layman in the promoting of God's Kingdom. He was an evangelist as well as a reformer; and an educator as well as an agitator. His life became related to all the great issues of his day. The fact that he was chosen as Chaplain of the House of Representatives of the United States is an evidence that he was far more than an exhorter upon God's platform.

IV

Yet we must grant to him the glory of his specialty. Doubtless there was a distinctly American reason for that. An interesting contrast could be made, in one respect, between him and Francis Asbury. We may debate the precise relation that Asbury had to our government—or even the question as to his citizenship. But Asbury's roots were in English soil—in an intellectual geography where the divine rights of kings and priests had been firmly planted. On the contrary, Snethen's whole history was really American. While this comparison might be exaggerated, it must still be true that one native to our Republic would be more likely to free himself from techniques of political and ecclesiastical government that were prone to be touched by superstition. We must sometimes wonder whether this difference in early environment did not show itself in kindly ways on many of the long journeys when Asbury and Snethen were traveling companions; even as we may wonder when we think of how the conversations with Snethen must have differed from those that Asbury held with Black Harry!

V

There is yet another real justification for this biography. The separation of the Methodist Protestant group in 1830 made, also, a separation of history. The later separation of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, in 1844, had something of the same effect. In many ways there were three channels, put apart by fairly

INTRODUCTION

wide islands. When, however, the three streams flowed together again, each gained the history of the other. Once the people of the two larger Methodisms owned a part of Snethen's life; now they own it all! He is no longer only "theirs"; he is "ours"; and, therefore, "ours" is "theirs." The union of Methodism conferred on all of us not merely material properties, but historical properties. So it made for the Episcopal Methodisms a free gift in the person of Nicholas Snethen. We do not need to view him controversially; or to overstress the fact that he trusted the evolutionary process more fully in the anti-slavery and anti-alcohol movements than he did in the lay movements. We can gladly accept the verdict that in the list of those who furthered the cause of democracy in the Churches of Christ, his name has secured a luster unsurpassed. The Methodist who so far cuts himself away from the past as to lose the hero of Dr. Feeman's book will rob himself of a glorious niche in our Hall of Fame.

EDWIN HOLT HUGHES
Bishop

Chevy Chase, Maryland
July, 1949.



PART ONE

TRANSITIONS

THERE is no organized group behind free men because they do not strive for political power.—“Manifesto for Free Men,” Zilahy. *United Nations World*, January, 1948.

Chapter One

FROM LONG ISLAND TO LINGANORE, 1769-1813

PLAIN NICHOLAS SNETHEN was his name without any distinguished title or any official pre-eminence. In this, as in other respects, such as hardships and heroic sacrifice, he is fully identified with the majority of itinerants in the early American Methodist Crusade. He was in some ways the superior of many of these invincible horseback protagonists of the Gospel who carried forth their cause from its anchorage along the Atlantic to the advancing pioneers of America's inland frontiers.

Investigation seems to show that the name is pronounced as if spelled "Sneethen." According to tradition on record, the name in his case goes back to Wales, where the family dwelt in the vicinity of Mt. Snowden, Snauthen or Snethen. There are other Snethens in America besides this family group. Some of these claim Scandinavian ancestry preceding their settlement in England before emigrating to America. They may all belong to a common origin. One Abraham Snethen, whose ancestry is traced to New Jersey, was born in Kentucky in 1794. He became a notable minister in the Christian Church—not Disciple—sometimes termed the "New Light" Church. He preached in his native state, in western Ohio, and northern Indiana. It is of interest to observe here that this Christian church was the outgrowth of the James O'Kelly division in the Methodist Episcopal Church in Virginia, of which more will be said further on, as it relates to the career of Nicholas Snethen, and that its name is now identified with the Congregationalists in the Congregational-Christian Church, which is on the verge of another important merger.

Nicholas Snethen's great-grandfather emigrated to the Dutch

colony on the Island of Curacao, one of the West Indies some miles off the coast of Venezuela. It was and still is known for a famous liquor bearing the name of this island, and made by distilling the juice of orange peeling, which became an article of Dutch export. The great-grandfather died, leaving a widow and a son. This widow Snethen, with her son, left Curacao for New Amsterdam, where the Dutch West India Company had been building up a world trade in firearms, furs, rum and slaves, and was laying the foundation on lower Manhattan and along the Hudson for America's metropolis. To this expanding center of trade, home-building, and spreading farms—some of them large estates—the mother and son came, locating at a place called "Fresh Pond" near Glen Cove on Long Island. No date is given for this immigration, but it must have been in that period when doughty Peter Stuyvesant peremptorily closed up his administrative affairs according to the wishes of the Duke of York, who had appeared with an English fleet in the harbor. The aggressive New Netherland design gave way to the New York plan.

The name "Pond" is a frequent one in Long Island topography and history. It is probable, from the facts available, that "Fresh Pond" where Nicholas Snethen was born was located somewhere between Glen Cove and the present incorporated village of Sea Cliff. It must have been a small pond of fresh water a bit inland from the sea, formed by a creek which became temporarily blocked by alluvial deposits that prevented the sea water from coming in until removed by digging, or the rise of water.¹

Records in the Surrogate's office of New York and the office of the Town Clerk at Oyster Bay show that Barak Snethen and the Weeks family lived in this vicinity. The son of the Curacao widow Snethen, on reaching his majority, married Deborah Weeks of Quaker stock, and to them was born a son named Barak. This Barak Snethen married a cousin, Ann Weeks, and into this family were born six children—five sons and one daughter, Deborah. The five sons were John Nair, John, Nicholas, Carlton and Gregory. Worthington G. Snethen, son of Nicholas Snethen, has recorded

¹ See Appendix—*History of Long Island*, Benjamin F. Thompson.

that "Nicholas was the oldest of six children, and was born November 15, 1769."²

The will of Deborah Snethen, the grandmother, at Mosquito Cove, in township of Oyster Bay, Queens County, dated January 20, 1785, confirms this.³

The husband of Ann Weeks, father of Nicholas, was known as "Barak Snethen" and so written by his mother in her will, but is spelled in Oyster Bay records "Barach Sneithen, Snethen, and Sneathen." He was an officer in the British Colonial Army, and took part in the capture of Montreal in 1760. Afterward he became a farmer, miller, and owner of a freighting schooner plying between Long Island and New York City. In volume 7, Town of Oyster Bay records, is the following item: "At a Town Meeting Ye 2nd Day of April 1771 for Choosing Town Officers for the ensuing year," Barak Snethen was chosen one of the "Pounders," or a pound master, a position he held successively for at least eight years. He was chosen for this Collector's position from Mosquito Cove, which is the place his mother gave for her residence in her will.⁴

This retired British Army officer joined the forces of a growing population that was making Long Island the vegetable garden and granary of the city across East River. When Nicholas was born—that is the period of the Revolution—Long Island was the most thickly settled portion of the colony, and remained so for a number of years. This eldest son, Nicholas, shared in the activities of his father's pursuits. He learned to farm. It is noticeable that his grandmother willed to him the farm tools: "the waggon, plow, harrow, hose, axes, etc." No doubt he worked in his father's mill where the power was either the wind pushing around its huge fans of Dutch design, or the water wheel, and he learned also to sail the schooner, with its loads of farm and mill products, to the other and more urban island, where nearly three centuries later the capital of the nations of the world would stand.

² Letter to Sprague's *Annals of the American Pulpit*. Baltimore, November 15, 1860, Worthington G. Snethen.

³ See Appendix for copy of this legal paper.

⁴ Vol. 7, *Town of Oyster Bay Records*.

Nicholas' training for life began with his mother, who gave him instruction in the Prayer Book and in other things, to which was added instruction in a country school. He picked up considerable knowledge from his contact with older men with whom he talked, for he had an early interest in acquiring information.

The family moved, in 1790, to Staten Island. Before this he had, according to Drinkhouse, shown ability in religious discourse. "He first recognized the ability of Nicholas Snethen by appointing him leader of a class formed in Brooklyn."⁵ While on Staten Island, where the father had removed, Nicholas Snethen came under the influence of the rector of St. Andrews Church, Dr. Moore, who later became the Bishop of Virginia, located at Richmond. Young Snethen made a profession of religion. In all likelihood, a thoughtful youth, as he was, he must have been seeking a more satisfying religious experience. He knew from his childhood something of the "Friends." He had studied the Prayer Book. He came under the influence, if Drinkhouse is correct, of an able Methodist in Hickson, and now he adds to his experience a religious confession under the direction of an Episcopal clergyman.

The next year the family went to Belleville, New Jersey, to live, and there he "was converted under the preaching of the Methodists," so writes his son. "He joined the class of John Dow, and for two years spoke and prayed in public with such success as to induce him to become a Methodist preacher. He found much difficulty, at first, in preparing himself for his new duties, having no one to help him, but he soon came to be a fluent speaker, and to make some progress in elementary learning, which had been sadly neglected in his early youth."⁶

He entered the itineracy of the Methodist Episcopal Church in September, 1794, being nearly twenty-five years of age. He was appointed to New England, serving the Fairfield Circuit in Connecticut one year; Tolland, Connecticut, the second year; the Vershire Circuit, Vermont, the third; and Portland Circuit, Maine, the fourth.

⁵ *History of Methodist Reform*, Vol. 1, p. 239. Edward J. Drinkhouse. Drinkhouse is referring to Woolman Hickson, whom he credits with introducing Methodism into Brooklyn in 1781, and who died seven years later.

⁶ Sprague's *Annals of the American Pulpit*, p. 244, November 15, 1860, Worthington G. Snethen.

TRANSITIONS

New England's circuit-riding built him up in health, and he came back a much stronger looking man than when he went away. During these four years he read and studied at every opportunity. Colhouer calls him an excellent English scholar when he entered the ministry, and has described his application to further study to be "with increasing zeal." He read the poets and other classics while in New England, and afterward studied Hebrew, Greek, Latin, French, until able to translate in the first three, and in French to converse and translate articles in journals of this language for the American press. He read extensively in science and in history, and knew church history well.⁷

Snethen had developed physically into a large person by the time he reached thirty. His eyes were grayish-blue, his hair dark brown, rather curly, and rolled back on a noble looking head. He bore a friendly countenance and was commanding in appearance. However, his respiratory functions were inherently weak and he was subject to recurring attacks of fever, asthma and rheumatism for the most of his life, and at times despaired of his living much longer.

Upon his return from New England he was appointed to Charleston, South Carolina, one of the most prominent stations in the church, where the General Conference met in 1800, and he was ordained elder. He was elected Secretary of this General Conference, and also to the Committee selected by the Conference to make answer to James O'Kelly's "Apology," which was producing schism in the church. Philip Bruce, George Roberts, and Nicholas Snethen composed the Committee, and Snethen, the youngest member, was appointed to make the "Reply." Bishop Asbury took him for his traveling companion back to Baltimore from Charleston, and stationed him there for a year. He submitted the "Reply" to Bishop Asbury in August, which was approved by him.

While in Philadelphia that early fall he nearly died of the yellow fever during a stay at the home of Dr. Thomas Dunn, who attended him, and who, with the assistance of Mrs. Dunn, saved his life. He was able to preach by Thanksgiving, and preached a memorable sermon.

⁷ *Sketches of the Founders of the Methodist Protestant Church*, pp. 23, 24, T. H. Colhouer.

That winter he began a course of lectures on preaching the Gospel, but his health did not permit the completion of the series, which were not published until 1822. Bishop Asbury, having chosen him again for his traveling companion, sent him to Winchester, Virginia, to preach, that he might live in a more salubrious climate and recover his health. He gained in health and strength, and so pleased the churches where he was heard that he was asked to stay on, but Bishop Asbury took him with him in September for his itinerary into East Tennessee, to Augusta, Georgia, and then to Baltimore. He went up into New Jersey to visit his father, Barak Snethen, and then rejoined Bishop Asbury on Staten Island, where they conferred on Snethen's answer to James O'Kelly's "Rejoinder," a further publication of this flaming dissenter. Asbury sent him from here to fill the Bishop's appointments in Maryland. While on this mission in the vicinity of Pipe Creek he became acquainted with Susannah Hood Worthington, daughter of Charles and Elizabeth Worthington, who were dead. She lived at the village of Linganore, not many miles from Frederick, Maryland, the county seat. There have been several Worthingtons in this vicinity. It is a distinguished name in Maryland, and also in Ohio, most likely, as evidences suggest, with a common ancestry.

Snethen was sent from Frederick, Maryland, in August, 1802, to fill the Bishop's appointments in the West. It was on this mission that his horse fell upon him near Mt. Sterling, Kentucky, injuring his right leg, which halted his journey for some days. Completing his appointments, he met Bishop Asbury in South Carolina in January, 1803. A fever attacked him in the lowlands, but he was able to go back to Baltimore with Asbury.

"During the year ending with the General Conference of 1804, Mr. Snethen travelled alone for the Bishop, and there is no record of his route preserved. With the close of this year terminated his assistant Episcopal labors. A new era of his life was at hand."⁸

The marriage license of Nicholas Snethen and Susannah Hood Worthington, on file in the office of the Clerk of the Circuit Court of Frederick County, Maryland, is dated May 1, 1804. He had actively participated in the General Conference then in session on

⁸ Letter to Sprague's *Annals of the American Pulpit*, p. 246, November 15, 1860. Worthington G. Snethen.

TRANSITIONS

a delegated General Conference, and on a resolution to abolish the office of presiding elder. Securing a leave of absence from further attendance, he went to the home of Miss Worthington's sister in Frederick County where they were married. The groom was approaching thirty-five, and the bride being about nine years younger.

They went at once to New York City, where he was stationed senior preacher. By this marriage he came into possession of a 280-acre farm at Linganore, chiefly wheat land, with some slaves, two miles from the small town of Liberty in Frederick County. He would have freed the slaves immediately, but was legally hindered. He is known to have treated them with considerateness, and years later obtained their emancipation.

They served in New York City for two years; then Bishop Asbury, who had very little sympathy with his preachers who married, offered Snethen the Fell's Point Station in Baltimore, provided the station would receive a married preacher. Snethen was averse to accepting such an assignment, and went to live on the farm at Linganore where his management was needed. He took an active part in manual labor on the farm, but continued to preach when called upon, and in August, 1807, held a camp meeting on his own farm, said to be the first in Frederick County.

In the summer of 1808 he was offered a position as assistant pastor in an Episcopal church in New York City, under Thomas Lyell, but declined. The following spring he was again assigned to Fell's Point with the understanding that he could leave his family at Linganore and make the day's journey by horseback to his appointment from week to week.

The following year he moved his family to Baltimore and in 1811 became pastor of Georgetown, District of Columbia, moving his family. During this pastorate he was Chaplain of the House of Representatives and became a friend of Henry Clay and other distinguished leaders.

In 1812 he was appointed to Alexandria, Virginia, again moving his family. He was made pastor of Liberty Circuit, near Frederick, Maryland, in 1813, and in March, 1814, he located, permanently, on the farm at Linganore to give it his personal attention and to educate his children.

*Chapter Two*FROM LINGANORE TO THE BANKS OF THE WABASH,
1814-1829

His eldest son, Worthington, tells us that the most of his educational training was given him by his father, extending as far as university courses. Two years afterward Bishop Asbury died and Snethen delivered his notable funeral discourse in May, which was published in a pamphlet. It was at this time he allowed himself to be named the candidate for the House of Representatives by the Federalist Party of his district. He was defeated, and the story is told that he and the candidate of the Republican Party of that day met in a public meeting to speak on the issues. Snethen spoke first, and with captivating eloquence. His opponent followed, and took the position that no man with such ability should be taken from the ministry and sent to Congress. He won the election.

The Federalist Party was suffering from division in its ranks. The next year Snethen championed a party ticket of candidates for election to the Maryland House of Delegates, but a fusion ticket defeated them. This was the extent of his activity in American political life. It was in this period of his life that he suffered a severe attack of his recurring sickness, which caused him to question as to how long he might live. And it was also this period when he gave his most serious thought to the problem of church government. His time was spent in oversight of the farm, in reflection on the growing issue in the Methodist Church, and in responding to invitations to preach, principally at various camp meetings.

W. S. Stockton invited him in April, 1821, to become a contributor to the *Wesleyan Repository*, which he was beginning to publish at Trenton, New Jersey, to provide an organ of free discussion on a variety of subjects, and especially of matters of interest to Methodists. Snethen had questioned if his days of useful ministry were not nearing a close, due to his poor health and what looked to be a lessening opportunity to serve. However, he was only two years past fifty. When the editor of the *Wesleyan Re-*

pository gave him this opportunity to express his views, and when the editor himself, in a special article signed "A Methodist," threw open his columns to the discussion of lay rights, he felt a door had been opened for which he had been unconsciously in preparation, and he entered to become the leading champion of that cause, not only for the period 1821-30 but for the rest of his life. He was generally recognized by the Reformers, as they came to be known—those who wished for and worked for changes in the Methodist Episcopal government toward a more democratic polity—as the "Father of Lay Representation."

On August 11, 1826, he, with Mrs. Snethen, mortgaged their 280-acre farm in Frederick County, to secure a note of \$3,000.00 given to Abraham Jones which was to fall due on August 1, 1829.

Economic conditions were tightening and setting the stage for the financial tragedies of 1837. The Snethens were unable to meet their obligation, when the note matured in 1829. They closed up their affairs in Maryland, arranging for the freedom of the remaining slaves, and went West.

The oldest son, Worthington Garrettson, was twenty-four years of age;* and Nicholas C. Snethen, a brother, little more than a year younger. There were another son, Charles C., and three daughters, Elizabeth Ann, Susan M. H. and M. Annabella. Annabella was about fourteen.

They left Maryland and their beloved Linganore for the banks of the Wabash, not far from Merom, Indiana. It is most probable that this going West was motivated by the prevalent belief in economic betterment on the wave of emigration westward, but there must have been other considerations in the mind of Nicholas Snethen. He knew something of the democratic spirit of that Middle West, and of its possibilities for a great Methodism in the Ohio and Mississippi Valleys, and who knows but that he foresaw "the irrepressible conflict" which was in the making. He was now past sixty, and Mrs. Snethen nearing fifty-three years.

They settled at Corn Hill Farm in Sullivan County. One is moved to speculate why he chose Merom for his home, and the place for making a new start in home building. Merom is noted for

* Was he named after Freeborn Garrettson? It is possible for Garrettson and Snethen were intimate friends with sympathetic views on the subject of church government.

its beautiful site high up overlooking the historic Wabash River. It was early a center of cultural interest, and became the location of Union Christian College with its five-story College Hall of fine architectural features, visible in all directions over a large area. Since 1936, Merom Institute has operated the plant.

Nicholas Snethen was farming along the Wabash in the spring of 1830. A brief obituary notice appeared on January 14, 1831, in the church organ: "Mrs. Susan H. Snethen died November 10, 1830, 53 years of age, consort of the Reverend Nicholas Snethen. Endured without a murmur the hardships of the itinerant ministry. A daughter died two weeks preceding her death, on the eve of womanhood. Died at her residence, Corn Hill Farm near Merom, Indiana, whither she had removed in May last. She was a member of the Methodist Episcopal Church for nearly thirty years."⁹

The daughter, Annabella, the youngest, died October 30, 1830, and the mother followed two weeks later, in November. The family venture had terminated in a saddened and broken home circle.

Chapter Three

THE RIPENING YEARS, 1830-1845

THE uninvited changes in life's course that pierce the marrow of the human spirit reveal what inner resources have been built up or neglected. When losses in fortune fall so heavily that life is forced into unaccustomed and less prideful ways, perhaps, not infrequently do men resort to self-annihilation in some despairing moment or let the human spirit waste its substance and its wonted aspirations shrivel. The inner forces of the vine or tree finally determine whether their embryonic fruit shall be blasted or shall ripen into a beautiful maturity beneath the sun and by the wind and frost. This analogy holds good for humans.

⁹ *Methodist Protestant*, Vol. 1, January 14, 1831.

TRANSITIONS

Nicholas Snethen was not without the inner resources about which he had preached, and he did not become "a castaway" under bodily suffering, material loss and the forced changes in life for him, through family ties forever broken. He settled up the affairs on Corn Hill Farm, near Merom on the Wabash, and re-entered the itineracy. He was now past sixty-one, less than fifteen years left to finish his course. Uniting with the Ohio Conference of the Methodist Protestant Church, he served the station at Cincinnati where he became deeply appreciated and much beloved; was minister in Louisville, Kentucky, and at Zanesville, Ohio, and when too old for active work, took a supernumerary relation. He was made president of the General Conference of his church in 1834, four years after its organization, and elected co-editor of the church organ with Asa Shinn, a position which he resigned at the end of one year, after Shinn could take full charge in order to reduce the expenditures of publication. He traveled through some of the conferences, preaching and promoting Christian fellowship. He published his famous "Essays" on the rights of the laity. He responded to a call to lend his influence and direction in an educational enterprise in New York City, and gave a course of biblical lectures in the Broome Street Church for the instruction of young candidates for the ministry.

Certain provisions in the Act of Congress setting up the North-West Territory, which had been blossoming into states, greatly stimulated the public interest in education in this region. The two decades, 1830-1850, were characterized by numerous efforts to establish schools and colleges in this region. It was in the first decade of this period that the Manual Labor College type of school inspired a number of serious attempts to establish such schools, East and West. Oneida Institute, New York State, became such a center with its Bible communism and search for perfection in human life. In the forest clearing at Oberlin this pattern at first prevailed, which eventually gave way to an outstanding liberal arts institution. The idea spread among Methodist Protestants in Virginia and Maryland. It took form at Newark, Ohio, through the efforts of a group of adherents who publicly declared a policy of non-sectarian education, under church auspices, which led

Wilbur Fisk of Wesleyan College in Connecticut to write a personal letter protesting the attempt to divorce religion and education. President Fisk, though his point has been proved through the years to have been wise, might have had more sympathy with this abortive attempt at Newark had he foreseen what would happen to a fellow New Englander, Horace Mann. Not many years later Mann went to Yellow Springs, Ohio, to operate a church college. He was himself a sectary, but he was worried unto death by the pricks and heckling of sectarianism. Pittsburgh and Ohio conferences joined to found such an institution somewhere in that region. They appointed a committee of two persons from each of the following cities: Pittsburgh, Wheeling, Zanesville, and Cincinnati. The most serious attempt to found such a type of school moved across the Miami Valley into the adjoining state. John Clarke, of Ohio Conference, College Agent—college agents were the factotums of bold college enterprises in those days—writes of a visit he had made to the Legislature of Indiana at Indianapolis to obtain the cooperation of the State Agricultural Society for promoting the Western Scientific Agricultural College.¹⁰

Two months later this John Clarke announces through the same church organ the choice of site for this college, and the terms on which the property was bought. Dearborn College was started on Pleasant Hill Farm, near Lawrenceburg, Indiana, a town anticipating a new railway running from Kentucky to Indianapolis, with access also to a proposed canal. This was about ten years before the railway age. The site overlooked the Miami Valley, then considered an Eden among the vying communities of the Middle West, if not the world, and not far away rolled the beautiful Ohio.

Nicholas Snethen was asked to take temporary charge of the new school, where seven students had come for learning even before it had opened. An old building was reconstructed and a new building erected, and the school was operated for three years, at the peak of the '37 panic, but in February, 1839, a disastrous fire ruined the enterprise completely, forcing abandonment, and without the property being fully paid for. John Haughton of

¹⁰ Letter to *Methodist Correspondent*, March 5, 1836, from Xenia, Ohio, by John Clarke.

Cincinnati, "a magnanimous friend" of the school and a liberal contributor, was the "principal sufferer."¹¹

While these things were in process, Snethen prepared a volume of twenty-two sermons which received posthumous publication in 1846. The next year (1839) he published "The Identifier," a small volume of Christian instruction and challenge especially intended for the youthful Church, but applicable to all churches in all time. He visited several of the annual conferences, traveling as far north as Princeton, Illinois, and out to Iowa City, Iowa. His zeal in promoting the cause of education did not die down, and when it was proposed to found a seminary for training young men for the Christian ministry at Iowa City, and that he become its president in 1843, he accepted. The school was to be known as Snethen Seminary. The year of 1844 into 1845 he spent in Cincinnati preparing a lecture course and in traveling to arouse interest and support of the proposed school. While on his way to Iowa City in the spring of 1845 he stopped to visit his daughter, Mrs. Pennington, wife of Dr. John Pennington, in Princeton, Indiana, and while there fell sick and died on May 30. He was laid away among the evergreens on a gentle hill in the Warnok Cemetery of Princeton beside his wife and deceased children. A fitting monument six feet high and twenty-six inches square was erected, with an open Bible on top in the chiseled marble. In addition to the usual personal and family identifications on this stone, it has the scriptural inscription from Romans: "I have fully preached the Gospel." The following names appear on the monument: Nicholas Snethen; Susannah Hood Worthington, wife of Nicholas Snethen; Susan M. H. Snethen. These names are on the headstones of the family lot: Elizabeth Ann Snethen, wife of Dr. John J. Pennington; Dr. John J. Pennington; Mary A. Pennington; Helen S. Pennington, wife of A. L. Groves; Nicholas S. Groves; John B. Groves; Nicholas S. Pennington. On the west side of the monument following the passage from Romans is this verse:

"Servant of God, well done,
Rest from thy loved employ;
The battle's fought, the victory's won,
Enter the Master's joy."

¹¹ *Concise History of the Methodist Protestant Church*, pp. 132, 133, Ancel H. Bassett.

Being persuaded that this setting down, in a rather prosaic form, perhaps, of the running events in the life-span of Nicholas Snethen is a reliable account, the reader may use it as a simple background for a better understanding of the man; his thinking and action, his Christian philosophy and service, and his personality, and influence through his several capacities, to which we now turn.

He was one of America's noblest citizens and most thoughtful churchmen of his time. We will remember his period of life to have begun just before the War of the Revolution and to have extended close upon the days of Lincoln and Robert E. Lee and of Beecher and Bishop Simpson.

The heroic and unsullied devotion to the principle of Christian freedom manifest in his character and acts, and in teachings and example, together with the profoundly Christian spirit in this manifestation, makes this knight of the saddlebag worthy of remembrance and a source of inspiration today.*

* It is not insisted that every known detail of his life has been noted in this unvarnished narrative. As for example a description of his silk tile now in Westminster, Maryland, originally purchased in St. Louis, with its hat-band of about eight inches, and his cane, accoutrements, probably, of his stay in Georgetown, D. C., where he was Chaplain of the House of Representatives and associated with Henry Clay and other distinguished national leaders. Such amenities would not greatly concern this veteran of the itineracy.

The distinction given Snethen in Washington happened several years before Bishop Asbury's death and the bishop expressed some uneasiness of mind lest his former traveling companion, whose musical converse had cheered his spirit on a number of long journeys and who had been his "silver trumpet" on notable preaching occasions, should lose his grip on the Gospel through association with the "high and mighty" in the nation's capital. This anxiety of Asbury for Snethen grew out of the former's general apprehension that the Methodists on gaining wealth and distinction might lose their simple and powerful faith in the Gospel of Christ.

REV. NICHOLAS SMETHEN
OF THE
METHODIST PROTESTANT CHURCH

DIED MAY 30, 1875.
IN YRK

76th YEAR OF HIS AGE

I HAVE FULLY PREACHED
THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST

TEACHMENT OF GOD, WILL BEGET
BUT KNOWS THE GOOD EMPLOY
GOSPEL'S FAUGHT THE VICTORY WITH
ENTER THE HEAVEN'S JOY

Amelia Smith
Died Oct 20, 1870
The 44th Year
Of her age

Susan H. Worthington
wife of
Rev. Nicholas Smethen
Died Nov 11, 1870
The 53rd Year
Of her age

PART TWO

A VOICE RAISED IN BEHALF OF CHRISTIAN LAYMEN

I AM devoting my life to awakening and training laymen. It's their world. . . . They alone know it.—Hendrix Kraemer, *Christian Century*, August 18, 1948.

Chapter One

SNETHEN'S APOLOGIA

SNETHEN wrote what he termed the "Farewell Address" of "Philo Pisticus," which was published in the *Wesleyan Repository*, in April, 1824. This was the last volume of this publication. Properly, this "essay" is his apologia. He narrates his experience with the united legislative and executive powers lodged with the traveling ministry and the office of bishop, and then he says: "In the belief of the rights of the church to legislate her own by-laws or form of discipline I am fully confirmed; nor am I less firmly persuaded that the germ or principle of all tyranny which has been or can be exercised over the Church, may result from a reunion of the legislative and executive powers in the same man independently on her consent or control. This reunion of power was at first concealed from me, and perhaps some others, under circumstances somewhat specious. [Refers to time of his entrance into the traveling ministry and his traveling with Asbury.] The idea was held out that we were in full tide of successful experiment; profiting by our past experience; and standing upon the shoulders of our former selves. As a new and spreading people, I own, I was flattered with this notion of going on to future perfection, taking it for granted, that the end must be good, without perceiving precisely what it might be. It is more than probable that if a General Conference had agreed in their high prerogative matters that I should not have broken silence. When, however, I saw the travelling preachers themselves divided and embodied under two great leaders and their lieutenants, it seemed to me the time had come to form a third party of the people, to hold in check if possible, these belligerent principalities and powers. Upon this course I resolved, under an anticipation of all risks and dangers.

Both the bishops were dear to me as personal friends; and toward both their seconds I have ever cherished a full measure of brotherly affection. The apprehended loss of the confidence of such men is always painful; but I foresaw that their confidence could not be lost alone; that their displeasure must draw after it, as in a train, the displeasure of many; and that they had power to create love or hatred. For your sakes [the Reformers] have I commended my love toward them. As I never felt anger or ill will, I wished you to know it, and I wish you now to know that I close these essays with the same complacent feelings with which I began them. The magnitude of the subject is too great to place any reliance upon flattery or persuasion. And victory at the price of passion and strife would be deeply purchased. The wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God. With truth and right and reason, all in my favor, it would have been unpardonable to have had recourse to personal crimination, even if opportunity has offered itself. Incredible as it may seem, I still love those who I have reason to believe are resolved to withhold, from me, my rights; but I hesitate not to aver that this love and this privation cannot exist together forever. There must be a time when the one or the other must cease. Love is an affection not always under the control of volition!"¹

Nicholas Snethen was not a professional reformer, or one with a reform-complex, as was the case with the early Oberlin leaders. He was possessed of a progressive spirit, was a far-seeing person and had a passion in searching for the truth. He was a free, inquiring, prophetic spirit. He considered self-criticism and self-improvement to be normal and healthy for the individual and society, as a loyal believer in democracy should. He early learned to recognize and respect facts and to trace the consequences growing out of the principles these revealed. He would have made a great senator, an able judge, a statesmanly diplomat or an outstanding teacher of systematic theology. He might have become an eminent administrator had he been called to such a position while at the prime of his manhood. He was never ambitious for

¹ *Wesleyan Repository*, Vol. 3, April, 1824; also *Snethen on Lay Representation*, p. 242.

position, nor to be a leader. He frequently speaks of "equality" and of "brethren" and these words conveyed convictions in his creed of democracy and were not just slogans to advertise popular ideas. In his earlier life the drive of an inquiring mind, dominated by an irresistible resolve to know the past to which he was related and the universe to which he belonged, and to lay this acquired learning on the altar of a faithful preaching of the Gospel, absorbed his time and energy.

In a letter he wrote in 1832, when he was sixty-three, he said: "From the first time I prayed in public until now all my exercises have been in obedience to some call. I have seldom volunteered any services. With no church authorities [Snethen held high respect for law and authority in human society] have I had conflict, nor have I been accused of 'taking too much upon me.' . . . I have not sought hearers nor congregations, but have been sought by them. This was known to all from my youth up."²

Early in his ministry he became a republican in his views on church government, through his search for knowledge to which he was assiduously devoted, as he puts it, "in the saddle and out of it." W. W. Sweet's comment in his article on Snethen in *American Biography* about him taking the side against Asbury in 1812 could make a wrong impression. Snethen was averse to fostering a party spirit though he had long held a view on church government opposite to that of Asbury.³

More than twelve years before this time he had discussed with Asbury the subject of church government and disclosed his democratic views, questioning the fitness of the Methodist Episcopal Church set-up. However, he was a younger man and a loyal Methodist itinerant, feeling it his duty to cooperate in the system, and to take orders from its executive and appointive authority. As stated elsewhere in this volume, he admired, greatly admired, and loved Bishop Asbury for his genius in leadership and his sacrificial and sincere devotion to the spread of the gospel in America, which esteem was never dimmed. But he differed fundamentally from Asbury on ideas for a sound government for Methodists in America from his earlier itinerant ministry on.

² *Methodist Correspondent*, September 5, 1832, Vol. 2, No. 24.

³ *Dictionary of American Biography*, Vol. 17, p. 382.

He heard about reforms and reformers in those early years. Reform was in the air. It could not have been otherwise following the impact of the American Revolution and the formation of the Union. He was at first inclined to accept a strong prejudice that early existed against any change in the system adopted. He once said: "How can a young man doubt what a bishop or presiding elder should tell him of a reformer?"⁴

He had an open mind on the subject. Snethen had an open mind on any subject but was not easily swayed from what he had thought through and held to be in accord with fact and experience. He was made the chief spokesman at the General Conference of 1800, to answer James O'Kelly, a recognition of the young preacher's ability and influence. Asbury knew then that he was a "new side" man, so Snethen tells us. James O'Kelly had published his "Apology" and Snethen was appointed to reply as a member of the General Conference Committee of three selected for this duty. This "Reply" was based upon the Asbury memoranda. It was not Snethen's ideas, but a compilation of Asbury's clothed in Snethen's language. He felt the "Reply" was justified, since O'Kelly had been separated from the Church for eight years and had promoted dissension and had formed a party, putting himself at the head, things that were wholly out of joint with Snethen's sense of loyalty and notion of wise procedure. However, he was sympathetic with O'Kelly's main issue, "the right of appeal," and he believed that if O'Kelly had been less impulsive and violent in the pursuit of his objective, and more patient, he would in time have achieved his goal, and without separation from the Methodist Church, resulting in so much bitter feeling and division, and loss of Methodist membership in North Carolina and Virginia. That there was unrest throughout the Methodist ministry may be found in the defeat of Asbury's plan for a "Council," first held in 1789, which was a body of selected leaders to shape and direct church policy. It is seen, too, in Dr. Coke's quotation "Five Things in View," which he introduced in 1791, among whose goals were the abolition of "arbitrary aristocracy" and the giving of the right of appeal to each

⁴ Quoted by Drinkhouse, Vol. 1, p. 456.

preacher.⁵ These two events took place in the quadrennium before Nicholas Snethen joined the itinerant ministry in 1794.

Certain back-lying experiences and ideas prepared Snethen to become the outstanding spokesman in Methodist Reform, even though he definitely, indeed, almost obtrusively, sought to disassociate himself from such distinction. It was his habit to use language with care. He did not lose himself in a furor of words. We must believe him when he declares that he had no aspiration to be known as a leader, no intent to play such a role. Undoubtedly his four years of circuit riding in New England influenced him in his bent toward independent thinking about the Christian church and other matters such as civil rights and liberties. The Cambridge Platform adopted by the free churches in 1648 in New England set forth the declaration of their right of self-government, which greatly influenced the colonists in their desire to govern themselves. The spirit of liberty was in the New England atmosphere permeating its life. Snethen not only strengthened his lungs and general physical condition in the bracing air, which was the result reported from his riding horseback over the hills and through the valleys of Connecticut, Vermont and Maine for four years, but this experience must have deepened his reverence for freedom in his soul. He was making a "Synopsis of the Gospels," he informs us, for his own use in preaching while being exposed to the impact of the spirit and practice of New England churches and town meeting technique. In this New Testament research and study, he developed an interest in the church organization and practice of early Christianity, which led to a more thorough examination some years later. Snethen always appeared to have a conception of the importance of the local church and its membership that Asbury did not perceive. The latter was so everlastingly keeping himself and his traveling preachers in motion that such perspective was prevented. Snethen once said, "There was nothing in this world he [Asbury] so much dreaded as a preacher who was not always in action. . . . There is real danger on this vast continent of men travelling wild, quite wild."⁶ He had a vision of the sig-

⁵ *Tribute to Our Fathers*, p. 72. R. F. Shinn.

⁶ *Snethen on Lay Representation*, pp. 61 and 336, Nicholas Snethen.

nificance of the widely developing local church and community life with its grass-roots knowledge and experience which he felt was not being tapped and utilized in shaping church policy, and of which most traveling preachers were ignorant due to their fleeting and insufficient contact with the local church and community life.

He had no thought of doing away with itineracy, but believed it should be more "flexible" as it did afterward become. Besides these personal observations he had made in the traveling ministry which doubtless influenced his decisions for his own life in the ministry, there were two urgent reasons for permanently locating at Linganore and becoming a local preacher. One was the education of his family of sons and daughters to which he devoted himself to the degree of becoming their instructor, as his son Worthington Garrettson tells us, and the other his health. He was not a robust youth when he was ordained and a few years later nearly died in Philadelphia of yellow fever. Family and personal matters moved him to become a member of permanent community life, laboring as an actual farmer with his slaves. During this period which opened opportunity for quiet reflection, he made a more thorough research of early church organization and its later developments, also reviewing the American Methodist Church organization and its social progress. This strengthened his early republican views and made him apprehensive of the consequence of the extreme conservatism of the traveling preachers and the totalitarian plan of operation pursued. It created a sense of peril in him for the Methodist Church in America. It occurred to him that the period of enforced inactivity as an itinerant might be providential, and that he was being prepared for some mission in the future. When he was invited by W. S. Stockton, editor and publisher of the *Wesleyan Repository*, to become a contributor, and particularly when the first article on lay delegation appeared in its columns, signed "A Methodist," he considered that a door was opened for him to enter into discussion of a matter for which he had been preparing almost from the beginning of his ministry. He was impressed that it was a call to service. He termed "lay representation" a "momentous" issue, and he meant this profoundly. He was convinced of the timeliness of such discussion, and was ready with his argument for a great cause.

Chapter Two

A GREAT DEBATE ON CHURCH GOVERNMENT

THERE were five leading points in the memorable Methodist debate in the decade closing with 1830. Around these, the chief arguments of Nicholas Snethen cluster, with, of course, less important but allied issues, all bearing upon the leading questions in discussion. The main objective of the Reformers was lay representation, and by this term Snethen meant the choosing of representatives by the whole church membership who would be authorized to legislate, to vote, and to decide questions arising in the government and management of the church. There was then, and has been since, not a little confusion on both sides of this controversy on the matter of the main issue. There were Reformers who would have "done away" episcopacy willy nilly, not Snethen. There were some who would have basically changed the itineracy, no doubt, and would have discontinued the office of presiding elder. There was a severe contention between the "travelling preachers" and the "local preachers." The latter rebelled at being entirely under the control of the former with no voice in the matter. This strain between these two groups, and the heated discussion produced, confused the main issue to the disadvantage of the reform cause. Snethen endeavored to restrain the local preacher agitation, believing that if the church would give free opportunity for the democratic principle to function, one could leave this problem and other problems to social progress for solution.

This may be the opportune place to mention three men among outstanding leaders who were most responsible, so it seems to this writer, for injecting bitter partisan feeling into this discussion of Methodist polity across a half century, from 1792 on. Candor demands this mention in the interest of the truth. They were James O'Kelly, who by temperament and ambition, though a person of distinguished ability, was a militant partisan; Alexander McCaine, in many ways a noble, admirable Christian man of high courage and marked intellectual and moral force, a man of dis-

tion, traveling companion of Asbury, strong preacher, bold in debate but capable of an unduly partisan feeling in controversy or in advocacy of a cause he championed; Thomas E. Bond, one of the most able and influential men in his Methodist generation. He has been credited by Bishop Simpson with possessing a singularly acute mind. Though early in the discussion of this issue of Reform he manifested a sympathetic interest, he became an adroit and determined opponent and muddled the waters in this discussion for a long period. Nicholas Snethen dealt with no other individual of his time, perhaps, as severely as with Dr. Bond, though never resorting to innuendo nor to violation of his spirit of Christian courtesy.

Writing in the third decade after this debate, R. F. Shinn made the following fair appraisal of the Reformers' leading contention: "The main issue for which the Reformers contended, which, if resolved, they felt would bring all other things wrong into adjustment was government by consent of the governed or lay rights." ⁷

The several foremost points in this controversy were the following: First, the Methodist Episcopal Church organized in 1784 was based upon the teaching of the Scriptures and the practice of the primitive church. Second, the leaders asserted that the church in America was in the Wesleyan succession and in harmony with John Wesley's desire and plan. Third, it was affirmed that the system was a notable success which was due to the system set up. Fourth, it was charged that the Lay Representation movement was revolutionary and would destroy American Methodism by "doing away Episcopacy" and abolishing the itineracy. Fifth, it was insisted that the great majority of the people of the churches were satisfied with the status quo and did not favor any changes.

In discussing these points under debate, Snethen treated at more or less length these subjects: The church as revealed in the Scriptures and church practice in early Christianity and since; Wesley's teachings and procedure; the presiding-elder issue; the unlimited prerogative of the episcopacy, bishops in general, the itineracy; traveling preachers as a body; local preachers; the so-called "Con-

⁷ *Tribute to Our Fathers*, p. 72, R. F. Shinn.

stitution"; church property; the American form of government, with which church government in this country should harmonize; the nature and measure of success in an institution; the baneful effect of ambition, servility, fear, flattery; equality; the place of sound principle in society; federated churches versus an "indivisible" church; the true church; the "no religion" criticism of lay representation; all of this bearing on his single-eyed drive for "lay representation." He had an abounding confidence in his cause. He wrote: "If we had nothing to say, no evidence, no argument to bring to convince them, we might grow impatient of delays or despair of gaining our cause; but as the case now stands, nothing but our imprudence or want of skill can prevent success."⁸ It was the same prophetic ring of conviction and faith that is present in his famous "prediction" made in 1834, eleven years later, when he was co-editor with Asa Shinn of the church organ: "The point of controversy is reduced to a unit—a pure unmixed question of representation. If we are true to it, if we glory in it, it must finally prevail and proselyte every Methodist in the United States. They may indeed remain Episcopal Methodists, but so sure as we are not moved away from our high calling, the whole lump will be leavened into Representation Methodists. . . . It will finally convince millions, as well as thousands, it will indeed convince all the world."⁹

The presentation of his argument was for the most part, if not in every instance, on a high non-partisan plane. His discussion is quite worth while reading as a massive argument for his main contention, and most of it valuable for his views on universal and timeless aspects of truth that his philosophic mind comprehended. Probably very few Methodists or other religious and patriotic-minded folk have ever read his work on "Lay Representation." It is not an easy volume to digest, requiring time and effort to grasp its significance as a total argument for the cause he espoused. The work was not intended for the headlines and market. It was a setting down in chronological order of a collection of documents to provide an authentic account of what he stood for

⁸ "Letter III" to "Friends and Brethren," *Wesley Repository*, Vol. 3, August, 1823; p. 202, *Snethen on Lay Representation*.

⁹ Quoted from Drinkhouse, *History of Reform*, Vol. 2, p. 297; also *American Church History Series*, Vol. 5, p. 553.

and said in a great discussion in behalf of a great cause. . . . He frequently called his articles and addresses "essays." These came into existence through the *Wesleyan Repository* and the *Mutual Rights* organs because those in authority in the church denied the Reformers freedom of speech in the columns of the church organs. These essays did not emerge from an armchair theorist. They originated in the heat of a memorable struggle for human rights in a mind that understood the realistic importance of its objective. Let him state his case: "True history cannot be written without authenticated original documents. . . . Let it be kept in mind that this is not an improved edition of my essays, with additions and enlargements. It is a collection intended to answer the purpose of historical documents. To alter or suppress any of the parts, or to add to them would be to destroy their identity. . . . These were written down; the production of one mind. The intention of the publication is not only to enable the inquirer to know what I did write, but what I did not write, and why I did not." ¹⁰

"The only Methodist division that arose to the dignity of a Principle was the Methodist Protestant, the rest were trivial quarrels." ¹¹ If Dr. Downey's statement is true, this was due very largely to Nicholas Snethen's concern for sound principles as a basis for judgment, and in setting up social organization. It was this consideration that determined his course, and not the success of a party of reform or any other partisan effort. He once said when discussing the Apostles' Creed, "I believe in the rights of the whole Church and every part of it," and he declared that in his recitation of the Creed he substituted this clause for the words "holy Catholic Church." ¹² He was not friendly to divisive efforts and used his influence to discourage them. Until Dennis Dorsey was put on trial, suspended and then expelled, he cherished the hope that the reform principle would be accepted by the "old side."

He knew intimately the Methodist Episcopal Church and the leadership of his generation, and he was willing to take time for its response to what was the will of God. Like an eagle from his aerie

¹⁰ Pages 19, 20 in Introduction, *Snethen on Lay Representation*.

¹¹ Quoted from David G. Downey, Book Editor, Methodist Publishing House, New York City, by Hugh Latimer Elderdice, at Centennial Anniversary. See *Memorial Volume of Centennial Anniversary*, 1928.

¹² *Snethen on Lay Representation*, p. 100, Nicholas Snethen.

he surveyed the whole field of his church's government and progress, and his course was characterized by discernment and wisdom and by a lofty Christian spirit.

He was not in favor of sending Reform messengers, or a memorial even, to the General Conference of 1824. He sensed the temper of the body and that it would be wise to let the General Conference be free from any "interference to do its will." He said, "Will it not be proclaimed the enemy is at the gates? That the standard of revolt is raised—and that the only security of the Travelling Preachers is in holding the title of church property and by exclusively occupying the seats of the General Conference?" And he said further: "Union and mutual confidence I hold to be of greater importance than the most plausible untried theories which can be offered."¹³ But he pledged his cooperation with a majority of the friends of reform if it were decided to send messengers, as they did. It was this General Conference of 1824 that issued its "no such rights" circular, following its adjournment in May, in reply to the petition for a more democratic policy in the church. The following August, 1824, the first issue of the "Mutual Rights" was published, which featured the following preface: "Every good citizen of the United States will therefore be tributary to the information of the people, and every good member of the great commonwealth of Christianity will love the equal and mutual rights of all her people. For they are all brethren and members of one another and therefore with equal interest will labor to diffuse the truth. . . . We have conscientiously endeavored to avoid any just cause of offense." Samuel K. Jennings, Chairman of Editorial Committee, may have written this, but it sounds in content and phrasing much like Nicholas Snethen. The situation might have been called "normal" after this drawing of swords for battle, but it would have to be interpreted as United States military men did often in their dispatches in World War II, "all fouled up." Where did wisdom lie in this instance, with the majority of the Reformers who insisted on sending a petition, or the haughty reply of the General Conference, or with Snethen who advised patience and avoiding "the appearance of evil"? He is repeatedly

¹³ *Snethen on Lay Representation*, pp. 196, 209, Nicholas Snethen.

cautioning against creating division in the church to which he belonged; repeatedly urging upon the Reformers the necessity of unity among themselves and not to exalt leaders, but adhere to the principle of "equality." He was not spurred by a "morbid craving for controversy and dispute about words."¹⁴ He was conscious of a noble Christian cause which he advocated with an undiminished ardor, and which he was eager that his church should recognize. But when Dennis B. Dorsey was treated with what he thought was a cruel injustice, he abandoned the hope of a reformation without a division. This event led him to believe that the leaders of the "old side" had determined to crush Reform by "excommunication" through the exercise of the excessive power in their hands.

What was the argument of this non-partisan reformer in his discussion of the five main contentions of his opponents?

Chapter Three

THE NON-PARTISAN REBUTTAL

His study of the New Testament led him to the conclusion that there was no definite instruction in it on plan of government, but the record of what the apostles and early church leaders did under the circumstances revealed a general procedure that was followed. His study of the Scriptures, starting early in his ministry with his preparation of a "Synopsis of the Gospels," together with his later study, led him to the conclusion that the Methodist Episcopal claims of Scriptural authority for the "feudal" pattern of 1784 were not well founded. There were then no beacon lights in this field such as Hatch and Canon Streeter.¹⁵

Snethen says on this point: "In regard to church policy, I am not sure that any principle is formally given in the New Testa-

¹⁴ I Timothy, 6:4 RSV.

¹⁵ The belief in a "Primitive Order" is an "illusion." "In the Primitive Church no one system of church order prevailed. . . . The first Christians achieved what they did because the spirit with which they were inspired was favorable to experiment." *The Primitive Church*. 1929. Epilogue, p. 268. Burnett H. Streeter.

ment. . . . There were churches in the plural and there were several in the same countries, regions and provinces.”¹⁶

“From the New Testament we find then the three following principles: First, that in the very beginning churches were local assemblies. Secondly, that each and every church possessed an identity of existence. Thirdly, that each church was distinguished from its office bearers. These three principles of church existence are the natural, simple, and obvious means of preserving the rights and members of churches. . . . The union of churches was maintained among themselves upon federated principles. . . . May it not be reasonably presumed that one cause why the New Testament is so silent upon the subject of the election of elders or bishops is that it was a commonsense practice? The qualifications for the office being stated, as they are, in a very full and detailed manner, nothing but a positive prohibition from divine authority should prevent churches from choosing or electing their own officers. . . . The New Testament teaches religious liberty and equality by example, the best mode, it is said, of teaching in the world.”¹⁷ Snethen left the argument on scripture authority for a totalitarian order pretty much *bors de combat*.

He was deeply appreciative of what John Wesley did for him personally by his emphasis upon “experimental” and “practical religion,” and he was ardently attached to Methodism. However, he did not consider him an authority in the field of church government, though commending his wisdom and genius in utilizing accidental circumstances for the achievement of his purpose to spread the Gospel of “scriptural holiness.” It was his opinion that there was no sound reason or foundation in fact for the insistence upon the claim that in everything the Methodist Church in America had followed either the example or wish of Wesley. He says: “Mr. Wesley innovated in principle and practice; so did his general Superintendents in this country, and so have the General Conferences. It is of no consequence to say that Mr. Wesley never granted lay representation, for he did not allow the itinerant preachers a suffrage in the choice of men or measures. The question is, if he had granted the principle to itinerant preachers, would he

¹⁶ Snethen on Lay Representation, pp. 119, 120. Nicholas Snethen.

¹⁷ Snethen on Lay Representation. pp. 120-130, Nicholas Snethen.

have restricted it to them, to the exclusion of the local preachers and the laity? I think he would not, for the same reason that he granted it to neither. Moreover, it is well known that the refused right of suffrage to the preachers and members by Mr. Wesley, as well as many other peculiarities in his economy, was predicated on his and their relation to the Church of England; the national church of which the King was the head. But in the present entire state of independence of the Methodist Episcopal Church none of Mr. Wesley's fears of separation, etc., can have any place. . . . When American itinerant preachers desire to vote, they do not send all the way to England to obtain leave. Well, what reason do they give why laymen should not vote with them? Why, forsooth, dear, good, old Mr. Wesley was not willing that laymen should vote. Ah! but he was not willing that itinerant preachers should vote and yet they did vote themselves independent of him and continue to this day to vote independent of everybody else."¹⁸

Such was the foil Snethen used in dealing with the very widespread and venerable argument that the Methodist Church government of his day stemmed from John Wesley's wish and example.

The presiding-elder question and the unlimited executive power of the bishop and the possession of property were linked together in the judgment of Snethen. He had no objection to either office provided they were limited in their exercise of authority and power, but when under the system followed the incumbents worked reciprocally to maintain this power, it aroused his distrust and he resolved to break up this interlocking directorate. He dealt with this interlocking power in his appeal for lay rights. He said on this point: "The great defect in our government, as I can see, is the want of an independent legislative department. In my conscience I do not believe that an independent General Conference never can exist under the present organization; my anxiety to make presiding elders elective was chiefly to promote the independence of the General Conference. An independent General Conference seems to me to be out of the question, while a large proportion of the legislative body are under the executive patronage. But I consider the hold which the exclusive power of making the

¹⁸ *Snethen on Lay Representation*, pp. 333, 334.

appointments gives to the bishop upon the property, as the great instrument by which the General Conference may be forever controlled. . . . The knowledge of the fact that the property is deeded to the General Conference is one of the reasons why I urge, so earnestly, the principle of representation.”¹⁹ He is critical of the possession of church property by churchmen as individuals or as organized groups, without proper constitutional guarantees based upon the vote of the people who are affected.

He criticized John Wesley for an attitude toward some of his preachers which grew out of Wesley’s consciousness of being a large property owner, an attitude Wesley would not have had without this conscious possession of wealth. Granted, Wesley was not using this wealth for his own comfort and satisfaction, but in a great religious crusade, and that finally he committed all of it to his followers, was beside the point. Snethen felt that the possession of large vested interests by a self-controlled group or individual in a religious organization gave to its leadership a sense of power and a consequent tendency to exercise power at the expense of human rights and liberties, and was detrimental to the cause of Christianity among men. The possession of the right of property by the church is a matter about which to be vigilantly concerned. The consciousness of possessing wealth can give to men an attitude toward other men not owning property which is neither Christian nor democratic. “If the right of church representation obtains, power will be dispersed and property held by the representative of the majority of the people, as well as the preachers, and these representatives of free men must be governed by the rules and regulations they legislate.”²⁰

There was too much of the Quaker in his blood to feel easy over the title of “bishop.” “My views of social justice had long corresponded with that of the Friends.”²¹ “We never think or talk about bishops,” said he, “in common sober sense.” “Let us have bishops, and if all parties are agreed, a succession of them, but let all their power and authority be strictly legal and let them be

¹⁹ *Snethen on Lay Representation*, pp. 352—354, Nicholas Snethen.

²⁰ *Snethen on Lay Representation*, p. 204, Nicholas Snethen.

²¹ Introduction, *Snethen on Lay Representation*. p. 20, Nicholas Snethen.

subject to legal restraints.”²² He once spoke of America using the word “king” instead of “president” but thought the “title would spoil the office and the people. Old prejudices and associations are not broken at will.”²³ He had a strong dislike for the trappings of hierarchy on the ground that they were not mere innocent, childish display, but had sinister aims. “Why these names, these titles, these offices, these powers, these prerogatives? Not surely to inspire love but fear. ‘His Holiness,’ ‘His Eminence,’ ‘The Most Reverend Father of God,’ ‘the Right Reverend,’ and ‘His Grace, the Lord Bishop,’ etc., etc. are calculated to fill the mind with awe; and the appearances are made to correspond with the sounds, to make the effect more complete. The triple crown, the robes of splendor, the show, produce their full measure to this delusion.”²⁴ He was not bent on “doing away” episcopacy in Methodism, as had been charged, but thought it was something in the universe that called for scrutiny.

In the General Convention of the Reformers held in Baltimore November, 1827, in which Snethen was the outstanding person, he moved in connection with the memorial prepared to go to the General Conference in 1828 by a committee of which he was chairman, “That the Reformers are not opposed to the itineracy,” and that “articles which have a tendency injuriously affecting the itineracy be excluded from the Mutual Rights.” It was adopted by unanimous vote.²⁵ This was not a tactical move by Snethen, though it was that in effect. It was an expression of his acceptance and appreciation of the itineracy. However, this esteem for the itineracy did not close his eyes to some of the foibles of the “travelling preachers” and their un-American insistence on sovereign authority over lay preachers and the people. “Nothing demonstrates the advantage of the division of labor, and of course, of power, more clearly than the change time makes in the human capacities. Young men for action, old men for council, says the proverb; but our unqualified itineracy says all men for action or

²² Snethen on *Lay Representation*, p. 47, Nicholas Snethen.

²³ Snethen on *Lay Representation*, p. 189, Nicholas Snethen.

²⁴ Snethen on *Lay Representation*, p. 283, Nicholas Snethen.

²⁵ Quoted in *History of Methodist Reform*, p. 139, E. J. Drinkhouse.

for nothing. How injudicious is that policy which throws away everybody it cannot move with a given velocity.”²⁶

“... I am so far from believing the travelling preachers would be injured by the exercise of church rights that it is my deliberate opinion that it never can greatly prosper in this country until it is brought to feel the reaction of these rights. Nothing but sincerity, in an urgent case, ought to induce travelling preachers or their friends to confess that they believe that itineracy and the rights of Christians are incompatible. . . . If this attempt to put the travelling plan in competition with social rights is persisted in, and the people are taught to believe that they have purchased and must continue to purchase the former at the immense sacrifice of the latter, will not itineracy stink in their nostrils? As a friend to a travelling plan, I am bound to advocate the legislative rights of the church. . . . Am I in America? Are these Americans? How then is it possible that a whole church should be deprived of the right of suffrage and none but the voices of masters and lords be heard in these halls of ecclesiastical legislation?”²⁷

This quotation from his Introduction on “Lay Representation” illustrates the character of his answer to the charge that there was “no religion” in this cause of “lay representation”: “It will be objected, as it often has been, that in all this discussion about lay representation, there is no religion. On religion I have written a good deal since the question of lay representation has occupied my attention; and have habituated my mind to think upon it without the presence of my usual prompters. At an early age I turned my thoughts to the causes of salvation; to the causes or means of forming a new social Christian character, and to causes of divisions among religious communities; and especially to the law of faith.”²⁸

“... The Episcopacy was introduced in 1784. Not a soul was won by it before it was brought into operation, and so of every case. We do not contend that lay representation is necessary to salvation; for if we did, we must deny our own salvation; but we do contend that it will not necessarily prevent salvation.”²⁹ “. . . Religion,

²⁶ *Snetthen on Lay Representation*, p. 165, Nicholas Snetthen.

²⁷ *Snetthen on Lay Representation*, pp. 104, 105, Nicholas Snetthen.

²⁸ Introduction to *Snetthen on Lay Representation*, pp. 27, 28, Nicholas Snetthen.

²⁹ Introduction to *Snetthen on Lay Representation*, p. 31, Nicholas Snetthen.

when considered in respect to the relation between God and man, can give rise to no question of church government; but when it is considered in regard to the religious themselves, it involves very intimate and important social principles."³⁰

Thus did Snethen meet the argument that the Reformers were revolutionaries, and would "do away Episcopacy" and destroy the itineracy.

It is not the purpose here to argue the Reform cause but to acquaint the reader with Nicholas Snethen, a Reform leader who does not appear to have been moved by any *prima donna* ambition to be prominent or to do anything except to improve the government of the Methodist Church to which he belonged, and to save it from what he was convinced was a mistaken course, namely, that the lay people should not be ruled with an iron hand but could be trusted to rule themselves, especially in America, a land of free men in church and state.

Now the success argument, which is ever present when changes are proposed in a going concern, is an effective one. Strongly entrenched organization that works, which produces effects that are desired, no matter what distortion of basic principles may exist, possesses an argument having efficacy. The leaders in such organization do not want any theorist to be tinkering with its policies lest the spell be broken. That this "success" argument laid its strong grip on both the "old side" and the "new side" is revealed in E. J. Drinkhouse's two weighty volumes on Methodist Reform. Methodists from their beginning have never failed in keeping the statistical mirror before themselves and in this work by Drinkhouse one can be amused at the ferret-like check the author periodically makes on the growth of the Methodist Protestant Church, as compared to that of the Methodist Episcopal, to the very end of his reliable and useful volumes. The success argument had deep roots. The argument of success was one of the chief justifications for a militant form of church government. What did Snethen say on this point? "Nothing is more notorious than our propensity, from the beginning, to appeal to our success, rather than to abstract reasons for our vindication. And everybody

³⁰ *Snethen on Lay Representation*, p. 48, Nicholas Snethen.

knows that the success of all great conquerors of the earth is the charter of their successors. It is, indeed, beyond all doubt, that any leader, in church or state, with absolute authority, can do more than if he were fettered by system; and yet it is a universally admitted fact that no governments are so liable to sink under their own weight as absolute ones. The ancient Romans had their temporary dictators in the emergencies of the state; but when the dictatorship became perpetual their liberties were lost forever.”³¹

He asks a disconcerting question—a type of argument of which he makes frequent use—in the Mutual Rights organ of March, 1825, in “Remarks on the 15th of Acts” in “No. III” part. This was signed “A Friend of Mutual Rights.” “When all the people of this great commonwealth shall view in every travelling preacher an opposer of representation in church legislation; and an asserter of right to absolute government over their own converts, who will be converted by them? Let men be taught to believe that to join the Methodist Episcopal Church is the same as to subject themselves to itinerant domination, and will the church increase annually by thousands or by tens? . . . Depend upon it people will not bear to hear of absolute government in this free country, and least of all, will they bear, to hear that it is Scriptural. O no! They have not so learned Christ. The sons of Columbia have not been so catechised.”³²

It annoyed Snethen to hear his fellow Methodists talk of their Constitution. He based his notion of a constitution on the ancient Greek states, and particularly on the example of the United States. “Let us inquire what was done by the memorable constitution makers of 1808? Did they imitate their countrymen in Philadelphia twenty-one years before, guarantee liberty to others while they provided for their own? . . . The Constitution of the Methodist Episcopal Church monopolizes on suffrage and representatives of travelling preachers.”³³

“When the creating power shall pronounce its fiat—‘Let there be a Constitution,’ let there be delegates organized and empowered after the manner of Americans. Let these delegates return the

³¹ *Snethen on Lay Representation*, pp. 141, 142, Nicholas Snethen.

³² *Snethen on Lay Representation*, p. 275, Nicholas Snethen.

³³ *Snethen on Lay Representation*, p. 316, Nicholas Snethen.

result of their proceeding to their constituents, then with their approbation, let there be a Constitution of the Methodist Episcopal Church and let all be governed by what all have had a voice in making." Snethen insists that until this takes place, "Say nothing about the Constitution of 1808."³⁴

While James M. Buckley in his *Constitutional and Parliamentary History* argues that the Church did have a constitution, basing his argument on two different definitions of the word "Constitution," it is interesting to note that the Bishops of the Methodist Episcopal Church raised the question at the General Conference in 1888: "Have we a Constitution," and a committee was appointed to report, in 1892; and in the General Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, at Baltimore May, 1898, a commission was appointed to find the "Constitution."³⁵ It would appear that Nicholas Snethen was a trail-blazer in this search for a satisfactory and written instrument of the organic law governing American Methodism.

Concerning the affirmation by the church leaders that the majority of the lay people were satisfied with the status quo and did not want it changed, he pointed out the grave defects of the system and decried the inertia of the organization, that was imperiling the future of American Methodism. He anticipated the certainty of changes which could not be ignored without disastrous consequences. He envisaged the day when finances would be sought from laymen of means for colleges and other institutional enterprises, and inquired how these men would react upon solicitation for funds with no voice in how these funds were to be applied and controlled. He stressed the spirit of servility that was being encouraged, and the atmosphere of fear and flattery that was being nurtured by the system which exalted ambitious leadership at the expense of fellowship, to the detriment of the whole church. He was fully convinced that lay people were competent to arrive at their own opinions, and capable of self-government. It was a grotesque picture he saw when the church he loved denied its membership this right against the background of the American pattern of social life and progress. So with a sweep of fitting and

³⁴ *Snethen on Lay Representation*, pp. 62, 23. Nicholas Snethen.

³⁵ *History of Methodist Reform*, Vol. 2, pp. 660, 685, E. J. Drinkhouse.

sometimes stinging persuasions, he appealed to the young preachers, to the older men in the ministry, to leaders, to local preachers, to laymen and all the people; to the members of the General Conference to consider the changes he felt were imminent, and to respond to this American urge for justice and liberty, and to meet the needs for a long range success of a unified church. He pressed his appeals on the ground of rights and privileges bequeathed by their American citizenship and in the name of the great Head of the Church, who had taught that "One is your master and all ye are brethren." He appealed to them also for the sake of the record to be written by the future historian. Perhaps he laid too large a responsibility upon lay people for he came to believe that the adoption of this principle of lay representation in Methodist Church government would overcome the most serious difficulties. He once advocated taking a poll which would provide for a vote on two hypothetical questions in order to determine public opinion in the church. "May it not come to pass," said he, "that the travelling preachers themselves may become so enlightened as to refuse to legislate for the church, or anybody else, without their representation?"³⁶ Taking a retrospective look and also one in prospect, he writes in 1835, in the introduction to his book *Lay Representation*, as follows: "There was a day when after diligent and anxious inquiry into causes and forethought of consequences, in the solitude of retirement, in the calmness of reason and with no other conscious emotions than those which seemed to me to emanate from good will to all who were or might be concerned, my purpose became fixed and has been steadily pursued from that day to this. It may be wrong. I felt the possibility that it might. I feel so now, but the evidences that it was right multiply upon me. If it is possible for the men who wield the government of the Methodist Episcopal Church to expel the petitioners for lay representation from her bosom, I will in anticipation furnish the lever and fix its fulcrum so as to compel them to use it, with one effect upon themselves. If they have recourse to the machinery of power, it shall operate a greater effect upon the hierarchy, than

³⁶ "Letter II" to "Friends and Brethren." *Snetben on Lay Representation*, pp. 197, 198, Nicholas Snetben.

upon the principle we petition for. . . . Changes in views and feelings must then begin which shall render the continued and consistent spirit and practice of discipline impossible—whatever may happen to the expelled, should they be utterly exterminated [there was such a purpose manifest after 1830] still changes must go on in the disciplinary departments of the expellers. . . . Changes, almost radical, have taken place among the expellers; they are still going on; and they will go on; but never back. The old spirit and practice of the discipline can never be regained. . . . Methodism is a child of providence; providence points to changes, and like a dutiful child, she follows.”³⁷

³⁷ Introduction to *Snetben on Lay Representation*, pp. 16, 17, Nicholas Snetben.

PART THREE

IDENTIFYING THE TRUE CHURCH

WHENEVER spiritual rulers attempt to check a perfectly free communication of thoughts and feelings among the people . . . then it becomes the duty of the people to decline their oversight as men unworthy to rule the Church of God.—Henry B. Bascom. Author of *Summary of Rights*. 1830.

THE form of ecclesiastical government in Protestant churches is determined by the people. . . . Protestant bishops are elected by the people. Protestant law is enacted by the people. Protestant church finances are managed by the people.—Bishop G. Bromley Oxnam in broadcast, Manchester, New Hampshire. Reported in *Michigan Christian Advocate*, March 4, 1948.

Chapter One

THE SNETHEN CONCEPT OF CHURCH ORGANIZATION

SNETHEN's study of the New Testament and of history, as has been said, led him to a view of church polity somewhere between a local church autonomy with loose association of churches, and what he called an "indivisible" church, as he described the Methodist Episcopal Church, with a closed corporation at the top controlling, with a membership being little more than a functional convenience in the *modus operandi*.

This latter form was not after the democratic pattern in the New Testament, as he discovered it, and was not adapted to fulfill its mission in the new and vast nation committed to the realization of what James Truslow Adams has termed the "American Dream." It was whispered around as early as 1823 that the Reformers were Congregationalists. This aroused a local preacher by the name of James R. Williams of Baltimore to write an article for the *Wesleyan Repository* in which he called upon Snethen to discuss early church government. Snethen sent him some papers containing notes on his thinking upon this subject, and wrote Williams a letter as follows: "The enclosed papers are at your service; they were first drawn up in the form of a synopsis in 1799. . . . One reason which first led me to make this attempt was the propensity which I discovered in these party writers, whom I read, to use the Scriptures in support of their preconceived hypotheses. It occurred to me that as a subject, church government is not of the same super-human nature as positive theology; that therefore, there is not the same necessity for explicit revelation in the form of description, propositions, and commands, and that if a sufficient number of precedents and examples exist in the New Testament to enable us to find a principle, it may be equally true and equally useful as

though expressly revealed. Almost all the conclusions which were thus forced upon me by this New Testament research were then like so many original discoveries; especially the following, viz., that the primitive churches were confederated and not indivisible like modern Episcopalian hierarchies.”¹

He wrote an article when he was seventy-four under the caption “Visible and Operative Religious Signs and Symbols” in which he stated that the views he had earlier held had been altered. He had become less dogmatic about baptism, laying on of hands and other forms, and more charitable and disposed to make allowance for effects of education and religious associations.² He esteemed John Wesley for his genius in discovering opportunity for spiritual advance under difficulties obstructing the progress of his religious movement. He was indissolubly drawn to the Wesleyan movement by its emphasis upon Christian experience and its union of the experimental and practical in religion. Having this at its heart, he felt Methodism should have freedom to adapt its norm to meet the personal and social needs of its time and field. He seems to have had no hard and fast theory in detail on what form the visible church should take, provided it was based upon the principles and essential practices revealed by the Founder of the Christian Church. Though denominational bodies multiply and proclaim their peculiarities and differences, their real foundation is to be found in the essentials common to them all.

Snethen was present at the Convention in November, 1828, composed of those who had been expelled by the mother church, and those who had voluntarily withdrawn. He was elected President of this Convention, which organized the “Associated Methodist Churches.” He addressed the body at its request before adjournment on November 22. He must have stamped his own creative thinking upon that body. Whoever proposed the name “Associated Methodist Churches,” it embodied Snethen’s ideas on church government. It was Methodist in its interpretation and practice of the Gospel, but gave the local church a recognition and a responsibility not heretofore achieved in American Methodism and made

¹ *Snethen on Lay Representation*, p. 113, Nicholas Snethen.

² *Christian World*, May and June, 1843. Published and edited by Thomas H. Stockton, Philadelphia.

lay representation in all governing units a part of its organic law. The following three articles appeared among those adopted to govern the body: Article 1—"Adopts the Articles of Religion, General Rules, Means of Grace, Moral Discipline and Rites and Ceremonies, in the main of the Methodist Episcopal Church." Article 2 provides "that each church shall have sole power to admit serious persons into full membership and regulate its temporal concerns." Article 6 provides for "Annual Conferences in each state, composed of an equal number of ministers and lay delegates." Article 16 called for a convention to be held in November, 1830.³ Dr. Edward J. Drinkhouse observes that in the 1830 convention "one magnetic personality is absent."⁴ Removal from Maryland to Indiana, sickness of himself and death of a daughter, and of Mrs. Snethen, prevented his attendance. Though absent, his influence was at work in setting up the Methodist Protestant Church. He had been a minister in the old church for thirty-five years. He urged that a "bill of rights" be made a part of the constitution, and in recognition of this proposal the now well-known "elementary principles" were made a part of the preamble. The first one of these reads: "A Christian Church is a society of believers in Jesus Christ and is of divine institution." The second: "Christ is the only head of the church and the word of God the only rule of faith and conduct." The third: "No person who loves the Lord, Jesus Christ, and obeys the Gospel of God, our Saviour, ought to be deprived of church membership."

There were two groups in that convention with differing views on the plan of church organization that should be adopted. This difference is reflected in the names for the new organization that were presented: Reformed Methodist Church, Associated Methodist Churches, Representative Methodist Church of the Associated Methodist Churches, the Methodist Protestant Church, in which the name Protestant was used with its accustomed ecclesiastical meaning. One group under the influence of Alexander McCaine, J. R. Williams and others, advocated a loosely centralized plan patterned after the Methodist Episcopal Church, with certain features eliminated and others added; what might be called a revised Methodist Epis-

³ *Concise History of the Methodist Protestant Church*, pp. 84, 85, Ancel H. Bassett.

⁴ *History of Methodist Reform*, etc. Vol. 2, p. 256, E. J. Drinkhouse.

copal Church, adhering to much of the long revered Methodist religious procedure but incorporating lay representation and certain other changes, thought to be corollary to this principle. They left out the episcopacy and its intermediate agency of control—the presiding eldership. The veteran editor, W. S. Stockton, and his distinguished son, who was something of a free lance in ecclesiastical organization, but always loyal, favored with others a more decided break with the Methodist Church as then organized. Snethen's support would have been given to the second group had he been present, but he would not have gone so far as to leave the new organization without an official and authoritative supervision. He probably would have favored annual conferences coincident with state boundaries, for he had advanced such a plan, with a superintendent at head of each state unit; a system of diocesan state areas. J. J. Harrod, an intimate friend of Snethen's, who championed his "Bill of Rights" which he had urged, offered a motion in the convention after it had established the office of president of the general conference, that this official should travel and have supervision of the interchange of preachers among the annual conferences. It was voted down through fear of overcentralization. The group headed by J. R. Williams prevailed in the convention. He was a thorough-going Methodist, a local preacher and businessman of Baltimore, and was esteemed for his sound judgment. He was chairman of the committee on plan of organization. The committee sought to provide for official supervisory authority and to preserve connectional fellowship and cooperative service through the annual conference presidents.

Chapter Two

POST OBSERVATIONS AND COUNSEL

AROUND a hundred years before the Uniting Conference in 1939, Snethen wrote some articles in the denominational paper signed

"Senex" which inspired several other articles by "Amicus" (J. R. Williams) and editorials by "Bartimeus" (Asa Shinn, editor of the paper). Snethen was appealing for a more thorough official supervision by the officials provided for in the constitution of the church adopted in 1830. He wrote in this period: "Save us from the irredeemable and eternal course of anarchy. Place sufficient power in the hands of your rulers to govern."⁵ This aroused Williams to defend the Plan he had championed and to indulge in praise of its success, and to laud the Methodist Protestant people. The keen-minded and ever candid Asa Shinn—"Bartimeus"—in editorial articles good naturedly twitted "Senex" on a possible change of opinion, and with great respect agreed with him. Then in a spirit of mild sarcasm, but serious discussion, he takes Williams to task for not being more realistic. Snethen was not interested in reviving an old argument of the Convention of 1830. He was putting his finger on a weakness which was lessening the effectiveness of the new organization. This was in harmony with his general philosophy of church polity. Given certain fundamentals in the founding of a church, it should have the freedom and authority to function effectively. He was not wishing to reconstruct the plan adopted, basically, but to bring changes in administration to increase its workableness.

It would be interesting to trace the innovations and expedients to remedy the defect which Snethen perceived, such as the Annual Conference Council formed at Adrian, Michigan, in July, 1875, and the cautious and gradual expansion of the usefulness of the President of the General Conference, but the purpose here is to tell the story of Snethen and the mention of such matters is primarily to that end. Attention is called to a section in the discipline dealing with social diversions, which was in accord with the Snethen philosophy. He had discussed critically the discipline in the mother church. He once said that the discipline was "the great thing in Asbury's mind." Snethen did not look upon it as a sacred ark never to be touched, for he had observed from the time the first discipline was put into his hands it taught him that it was the result of observations and experiment. There were no prohibitions on

⁵ *Methodist Protestant*, Vol. 3, pp. 365, 366.

social diversions adopted in 1830, but recommendations based upon John Wesley's teachings, leaving the final decision on such matters to the individual conscience and leaving the preacher free to speak as he was led. This was decidedly in the democratic trend.

Chapter Three

IDENTIFYING THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH

SNETHEN had a flair for identifying things: ideas, principles, organized groups, individuals. He wrote a book published in 1839 called *The Identifier*, a rather odd title. It is a modest volume of six chapters with one hundred seven pages. It was aimed to persuade the members of the new Methodist body to seek an identity—a Christian identity. They had nothing distinctive that would be dynamic in influence. They possessed no denominational badge like a form of baptism to identify themselves. They proclaimed no distinctive Methodist doctrine. He felt that the tendency to glorify a written constitution which he had eloquently championed years before, and which he cordially approved, was not a sufficiently positive issue to identify a Christian body. He reveals ecumenical insight in this small volume. He would identify the Reformers who were compelled, if they would continue to be Methodists, to frame a new church, with the early Christian church. Both were composed of the excommunicated. One had been excommunicated from a Jewish church by accepting Christ; the other by the Methodist Episcopal Church for allegiance to democracy. There was given to the early church a written or Scriptural constitution of principles by which they were to be instructed and governed, in obedience to which they were to practice love and not revenge, to act as peacemakers and not disturbers speaking ill will. They were taught to suffer persecution for the sake of the right; to be humble, forgiving, and to cultivate strong desire for spiritual quality in life.

He argues most realistically that this was the course necessary to

IDENTIFYING THE TRUE CHURCH

the existence and success of that early church which would have been ruthlessly rooted up had it violently fought for its rights and place, and the leaders made themselves agitators and revolutionaries in the eyes of Roman authority. He urged this new body of Methodists to cease imitating the old church from which they came; to forget their grievances, to rise above their enmities and to become a body of Christians characterized by the principles and spirit of the Sermon on the Mount. He said: "Facts and circumstances on all sides press upon us the consideration of our identity with the primitive disciples. . . . We may gain attachment to principles and social friendships, or degrees of brotherly love, previously unknown to ourselves. Have we not all come to suspect that our natures are such that we cannot take on the character of Christian gentlemen until we are fully reconciled to the dispensation which excommunicates us with Christ?"⁵

He proceeds to analyze, for which he had skill, the feelings and desires of these new Methodists, and probes deeply for what was unchristian in their consciousness. Including himself, he says: "We want some object or person to antagonize with. Could we excommunicate anybody, that would relieve us at once, but a law or consent of our supreme authority is necessary for this and in its absence we have not had the mob spirit among us. The feeling of retaliation is present; it is in us. . . . We need but to indulge to become enthusiasts of revenge. But to become enthusiasts in forbearance and forgiveness we must have the motives, the prospect."⁶

The Reform body resented the expulsions as being unjust and they faced a determined opposition with intent to destroy their identity. They were sorely tempted to allow the baser motives to prompt their behavior. Snethen said to them: "In newly formed churches the necessary want of experience and of precedents leaves brotherly love, as it were, to be all in all. . . . If popes and bishops and presbyters and pastors of congregations should love and govern after the moral pattern laid down in the Sermon on the Mount, could not all Christians live under their governments? . . . The end of all government is, or ought to be, the peace and pros-

⁵ *The Identifier*, Chap. 1, pp. 26-30, Nicholas Snethen.

⁶ *Ibid.*

perity of society, and while this is effected, there is no interregnum." ⁷

Snethen was not repudiating the course the Reformers had pursued or expressing regret; he was urging them forward toward the mark of their high calling. "We did live for years in the church after our opinions were known, without intending to commit any overt act against the discipline, and we are as much as ever persuaded that the attempt to annihilate our principles was uncalled for by the true interests of the church." ⁸ He closes this diminutive work with a challenge to the Reformers to become identified with the primitive church through the acceptance and exemplification of the Christian principles and spirit that Christ taught his disciples.

⁷ *The Identifier*, Chap. 4, pp. 76-79, Nicholas Snethen.

⁸ *The Identifier*, Chap. VI, p. 95, Nicholas Snethen.

District Conference held at Leesburg,
March 26th 1812

Moved that the rules respecting Slavery be retained in their ^{and adopted} full extent in those parts of this Conference where the enforcement of them does not interfere with Civil authority, under the following regulations to wit. —

1. That if any member of our Society shall purchase a slave, or slaves, the Assistant Preacher of the ~~circuit~~ Circuit or Station, shall appoint a Committee of Five members who shall determine the time such slave or slaves shall serve, and in case of Dissatisfaction, the person or persons so complaining, shall be allowed an appeal to the ensuing Quarterly meeting Conference whose decision shall be final.

nd 2. If any member shall violate the decision aforesaid by selling or disposing of such slave or slaves for a longer term of years, he or she shall be expelled, Except it can be made appear to a Committee of Five members appointed for that purpose by the Preacher having charge of the Circuit or Station to be a case of mercy or necessity.

Wm M. Hendree
Nicholas Smith Secy

PART FOUR

THE THOUGHTFUL OBSERVER

Chapter One

PERSONS

THE following sketches of persons, paragraphs from articles on current topics and proverbs by Nicholas Snethen, tend to bring out his broad human interests, his alert observations, thoughtfulness, and his vital social concern. It is significant that this Methodist minister of the late eighteenth century and first half of the nineteenth was not conscious of any discord in his Gospel message as a great soul-winning, personality-making preacher, and as a prophet of social justice. He was sympathetic with the Negro and kept a vigilant eye upon slavery in this country and abroad. He was interested in the American Indian, and in his redemption from his unprogressive and listless manner of life, save when blindly stirred at intervals by brutal excitement. He observed with scientific insight the effects of alcohol upon the human being. He sensed the lag in the education of women in the development of the American system, and voiced his views early on this issue. Soon in his ministry he became a valiant friend of Christian lay people, envisaging beyond most of his contemporaries their unexplored usefulness to Christian enterprise. These and more specifically religious matters drew his attention and the aid of his pen and voice. He was appreciative of human personality, and he frequently placed an unassuming wreath of an immortal worthfulness upon some humble meritorious person who would hardly receive any recognition, and if so, only bare mention in some unnoticed record. He was no respecter of persons after the fashion of adulation. This he would spurn to be. But he was quick to see merit in high or low places and to pay respect to it. Some of his sketches of early Methodist leaders possess intrinsic historical value.

FRANCIS ASBURY

Asbury was twenty-four years older than Snethen, and was about fifty when the latter entered the itineracy. He had been helping direct or directing Methodism in America for a quarter of a century. Snethen always respected him as superior in age and position, and admired his genius for leadership. This, however, did not keep him from differing from Asbury on principles of church government very early in their intimate acquaintance. The one adhered to the divine right of monarchy in keeping with his English ancestry as a pattern for Methodism in America. The other was enraptured by the American ideal and its embodiment in the United States Constitution forming the Union of separate states. The comradeship and trust in each other from the beginning between this older person and the younger were delightful. Asbury wrote in a letter to George Roberts in 1801: "I generally bear my testimony after Nicholas Snethen. He is like David with his harp when I am weary and dejected, and wrapped in melancholy and gloom." It is to be supposed that he meant to tell Roberts that the younger man inspired him and dissipated his low spirits. In the succeeding sentence in this letter his metaphor is not so spiritually minded, but in view of the eminence pie has always held in cuisine, his figure of speech portrays an enjoyable companionship. Said Asbury in this letter, "Snethen and I fit like pie."¹ They were congenial associates and the bond of affection was never broken even by basic and irreconcilable differences in thinking that developed, on which neither would yield, and which led to final cleavage in the church in 1830, fourteen years after Asbury died.

"Mr. A. I knew was as sincere as he was indefatigable in his endeavors to make the hierarchy independent of the people; but he was my father and we agreed to disagree. It was always a mystery to me how a man of his great reading and penetrating views of men and things could so entirely lose sight of the danger of an unbalanced government. Of the ability of Mr. Wesley to govern, no one has a more exalted opinion than myself; but who will say that his system was the best that could be devised? Mr. Locke understood

¹ Francis Asbury letter from Holston, September 27, 1801, in Rose Memorial Library, Drew University.

the science of government better than Mr. Wesley, though the latter had the benefit of the writings of the former.”²

Asbury always exerted great personal influence. “We always had occasion to notice that Mr. Asbury placed his chief reliance for the ascendancy of his influence upon his presence. Where trouble was there was he.”³

“Who does not remember Mr. Asbury’s point and severity when the subject of local or lay membership in the conferences was touched upon. He manifested a feeling of indignity at the idea of men coming into conference to regulate the concerns of travelling preachers in which they could have no participation. . . . But no sooner did the conferences begin to make rules to regulate the concerns of local preachers and the members of the church than the point and edge of his feelings became blunted.”⁴

SNETHEN DEPICTS ASBURY

Snethen’s “Discourse on the Death of Reverend Francis Asbury” draws a clear portrait of Asbury as Snethen saw him and heard him. In this sermon or address he evaluates his life and work. He selects his text from First Timothy fourth chapter and sixth verse: “A good minister of Jesus Christ, nourished up in the words of faith and good doctrine.” His theme is that Asbury “was a good man—good preacher—a good ruler, overseer or Bishop.”⁵

He calls attention in his introduction to the scriptural fact that the character in the text to be exemplified is not in the superlative degree which wards off any interpretation, that he is indulging in “invidious” comparison with other eminent persons.

He fixes the permanent place of Asbury at the very beginning in this discourse. He states in the first introductory paragraph: “In the death of Francis Asbury, the character of our spiritual Father and Guide is consummated and unalterably fixed—a character

² *Wesleyan Repository*, Vol. 2, p. 310, December, 1822.

³ *Snethen on Lay Representation*, p. 257, Nicholas Snethen.

⁴ *Snethen on Lay Representation*, p. 305, Nicholas Snethen.

⁵ See Appendix for sermon in full, also note personal letter of Francis Hollingsworth to Snethen, which the latter attached to his discourse as a part of it, “excepting those parts which related to himself.”

which must be forever associated with the history of Methodism in America."

This is one hundred years, exactly, before Ezra Squier Tipple published his memorable and noble volume: *Francis Asbury, The Prophet of the Long Road*. He dwells first, in elaborating his theme, upon Asbury's demonstration of an "experimental and evangelical religion" through the grace of God, and affirms that he revealed no "wildness" or "flightiness" in his Christian experience. He says, "Never perhaps has religious experience appeared in any individual, less liable to exception or challenged more universal confidence. Who that knows the man ever doubted the reality and sincerity of his experience?" This is a first-class tribute. Experience was an important homiletical resource in those days and could easily become professional. Snethen's comment on the absence of flightiness in Asbury's religious experience reminds of John Wesley, who while giving his followers considerable free rein in religious experience with not a little colorful demonstration, did not himself enter into this. He was self-poised, and in what Snethen next emphasizes, in Asbury, reminds of Wesley. "He was morally good. His religion was practical." That truly describes John Wesley as well as Francis Asbury.

Snethen appraises Asbury "a better preacher than he was generally supposed to be." He relies upon his own personal experience, "hearing him daily" and crediting him with being a "master of all the science of his profession." He tells of his mind being stored "with the opinions of the most eminent biblical critics and commentators." He mentions his excellent enunciation, his voice, a "clear and mellow base," the "purity" and "dignity" of his language. These gave to his pulpit efforts and especially to his conduct of a ceremony an impressive influence. He classifies him to be a preacher who wore well, and the "oftener heard" the better liked.

Snethen esteems Asbury to have been a "good Bishop," and like other men of his aptitude "born to govern." He maintains that those near him felt "the authority of his spirit." He considers his talent "almost wholly executive" and not superior in "judicial or legislative capacity," and because of this Snethen thinks Asbury did not appear to advantage in the chair presiding. However, his "majesty of command . . . almost wholly concealed" puts him

into that class of human geniuses who are able "to inspire their own disposition for action, into the breasts of others." He points out a certain hard-heartedness in Asbury as an executive. He terms this "the exercise of that awful attribute of power" when individual personal feeling and interests appear "to oppose the execution of public plans." Since Asbury gave himself in great personal sacrifice as a life habit to what he conceived to be the public good, Snethen says, he was unable to "balance betwixt the obligation of duty" and the "conveniency of others. He was a vigilant ruler or overseer. . . . In what related to ecclesiastical men and things, he was all eye and ear; and what he saw and heard he never forgot. The tenacity of his memory was surprising. Though not always right in his judgment, he was comparatively a good judge of men."

Snethen was writing this four or five years before the beginning of the heated debate of the second decade leading up to 1830. He is not unaware of the situation that might develop from clashing strata of opinion in the church nor of the criticism some would make of him for speaking of Asbury so appreciatively. The following paragraph is illuminating not only in what he says about Asbury, but of his own regard for what is true, and of his characteristic courage in giving it utterance when the time had come to speak out. He says, "When we affirm that he was a good Bishop, we are not ignorant how much prejudice, self-interest and opposition of theory we must encounter; but as the result of much careful and even critical investigation, our judgment is deliberately made up and we do not hesitate to declare that so far as good intentions, good motives and good endeavors could inspire to make him such, he was a good Bishop; and that whatever may have been the errors of his administration, they may be accounted for or traced to that complexity of causes and effects in which human transactions are often involved and which so frequently exceed the comprehension or direction of the fallible human mind." That is not only not being "ensorious" as Jesus taught, but is sound philosophy for any area in life where people really want to find the truth and follow it.

Snethen anticipates that the calling of Asbury "our spiritual father," as he did call him, will be objected to on the ground that the New Testament teaches we are to call no man master or father. He accepts this New Testament instruction in the sense that "no

man could stand between Jesus Christ and his apostles." No persons have been placed in the same "immediate and personal relations to the church as his primitive apostles." But it has eventuated in the course of the years among Christians forming into various bodies that there is often a leading character who is outstanding to whom they look "as to a father or founder." Such was our "late Bishop, the father of our present order and standing," as a Methodist Episcopal Church. "Others have labored abundantly; many have been useful members of the body; but his was the mind to discern and the will to command. His was the pervading presence and example. His circuit has ever been the bounds of the connection. He knew personally and by name all the members of the Annual Conferences, almost from the day of their admission as probationers. From him the travelling preachers took as it were, the tone and pitch of their conduct, and to his authority they submitted." Here Snethen hews close to the line: "Few of those who have followed in the same track have excelled him in any of the qualities which constitute a good man; in union of them all, none have surpassed him."

He ventures to assess the likelihood of certain adverse criticisms leveled at Asbury being maintained. "Ambition of governing and suspicion of disposition will perhaps attach to his memory. The former may be able to maintain itself on account of the indefinite nature of the thing. That he felt an early ambition, so to speak, of becoming a patriarch, may be allowed; though we have no positive proof of the fact; but let it be remembered that this character once obtained (and it was) ambition to sustain it becomes a duty and a virtue. . . . It is not to be classed at all with strife among equals, who shall be greatest." It was Snethen's opinion that the American Revolution had much to do with the making of the career and character of Francis Asbury. His fellow missionaries fled back to England. He stayed in America and was for a time held in suspicion and compelled to go into retirement. Snethen speculates that maybe he had an ambition to become a patriarch of American Methodism, likened unto Wesley in England, and maybe this ambition helped to keep him at his post on this new continent where a nation was being born, until his opportunity came for leadership in the spread of Methodism. If so, his ambition was worthy in the light of the results, and his wisdom praiseworthy. For the time did

come when he labored "more abundantly than all his fellow missionaries. . . . If the tree is to be known by its fruits . . . then an ambition productive of such effects could not have been of a criminal nature. No man can stand in the same relation to the Methodist Episcopal Church as its late Bishop; we may have among us greater men, greater preachers, greater rulers; but let them not aspire to the character of fathers."

Snethen admits that Asbury was charged with having a "suspicious disposition" but joins with others in thinking this was due to a "well-known irritability" produced by affliction and the "irritating nature of his labors" together with his unusual ability to obtain "secret information" and a natural alertness to such opportunity. Snethen speaks in this discourse of Asbury possessing a delicate constitution which was subject to recurring attacks of asthma and "inflammatory affections" until the enforced strain of his persevering pursuit of his labors wore out the physical organism. He sums up this matter with an aphorism to which he was frequently given: "Had he known the art of doing less, he could have done better." Snethen draws on his personal observation when with Asbury to portray him when relieved of pressure and in a "tolerable state of health." He says that when the annual conferences were over and the daily traveling and preaching was again the program, Asbury was all his friends "wished him to be." He had found him to be a most agreeable road-companion. He was "cheerful almost to gaiety; his conversation sprightly, and sufficiently seasoned with wit and anecdote." Young and old showed him tokens of respect and he brought "suavity and sweetness" into every family he visited and by whom he was entertained. "The memory of the man, the Christian, and able minister of the New Testament" will never die.

Following a condensed biographical narration of his life, his last sickness from influenza in South Carolina, and a description of his death at the home of his friend, George Arnold, twenty miles from Fredericksburg, Virginia, Snethen speaks of his character and labors and of his intellectual attainment by hard effort which he did not seek to display, and of his devotional accomplishment of which "he effected no concealment." "His prayers on all occasions, in the estimation of his friends, exceeded any compositions of the

kind they had either heard or read, while they had all the perspicuity of studied, written discourse, they seemed to possess the fitness of inspiration to the persons and subjects with his inexhaustible fund of devotional matter."

This eloquent and comprehensive discourse is of important historical value growing out of the intimacy of a distinguished traveling companionship, and Snethen serving under Asbury's appointing power as a regular itinerant for more than a decade, and several years as a local preacher. This importance is attributable also to the author's trustworthiness as an observer and his discriminating judgment of men and events. The discourse closes with a reference to the half century of American Methodism and its future. "Now for the first time, the General Conference is left without the presence of him, under whose auspices, it has been raised to its present eminence." He senses that a spirit of disunity could arise. "Deprived, as the family is, of the parent, let the children endeavor to supply the loss, by their united wisdom and brotherly love." This discourse is dated May 3, 1816, at Linganore, Frederick County, Maryland.

THOMAS RANKIN

Thomas Rankin was a Scotsman and reputed to be strong in discipline. He stood high among his fellow Methodists in England and was selected by Wesley to be a missionary to America in 1772 at the request of Captain Thomas Webb for more missionaries. He was welcomed by Asbury and the Philadelphia Methodists in June, 1773. He was in America five years, returning to Great Britain in 1778 to escape the difficulties arising from the War of the Revolution. He had been the superior of Asbury by appointment, and appeared to feel himself competent for his position. "Mr. Rankin was a pattern of neatness and preciseness in the minutia of manners, and was equally attentive to the manners of others. Every day his large white wig was carefully adjusted and powdered, and every particle of dust and down carefully brushed from his clothes. A young American preacher, sitting in a lolling position at a table with his chair leaning back, Mr. Rankin rose, and in the presence of the company, adjusted the chair and the position of the occupant, adding at the same time a suitable admonition.

"Mr. Asbury considered Mr. Rankin in the light of an opponent and it is certain that if there were any dependence to be placed in the correspondence of his English friend, Mr. Rankin did use all his influence with Mr. Wesley to have him recalled. Mr. Asbury was informed that when the news arrived that Mr. Wesley's name was left off the American minutes, Mr. Rankin, who was present, exclaimed 'That's Frank Asbury's doings' etc. It is due the memory of Mr. Rankin to say, that during his short stay in this country he conciliated the affections of several of the preachers, if not all." ⁶ Snethen speaks here as though an eyewitness, but he was only nine years old when Rankin went back to England so he was giving a traditional portrayal and narrative. But he had been very close to Asbury and shared intimate acquaintance with Freeborn Garrettson, who was twenty-six when Rankin left America and had been under his superintendency, and no doubt Snethen was familiar with the Rankin tradition through other close acquaintances who were older than he.

RICHARD WHATCOAT

Bishop Whatcoat was chosen by John Wesley in 1784 among several others to lead in organizing Methodism in America. He was made a bishop sixteen years after Asbury's ordination as the first American bishop, and traveled for six years until his death in 1806. Of him Snethen speaks firsthand: "Mr. Whatcoat though among the last in order of time (that is Wesley's appointees) was not among the least. 'His life' as a pious young woman used to say, who was competent to judge, 'was like an even-spun thread.' He had a second suit of natural hair which did not grow gray till later in life and he never lost entirely his European color; his features were small and his countenance smooth and placid. In his neat, plain parson's gray, after returning from the devotions of the closet, a painter or a statuary might have taken as a model for a representation of piety. The mild, complacent and the dignified, were so happily blended in his looks as to fill the beholder with reverence and love. His speech was somewhat slow and drawling, but not dis-

⁶ "Senex" in *Wesleyan Repository*, Vol. 1, December 20, 1821. Also *Snethen on Lay Representation*, p. 80, Nicholas Snethen.

agreeable after a little; his excellent matter came so warm from the heart, that a genial spirit of devotion never failed to kindle and blaze afresh under its sounds; his very appearance in the pulpit did his hearers good. His arrangement and expression were uncommonly clear and perspicuous. He preached more frequently from the Old Testament than any preacher I ever remember to have heard. It was delightful to hear him in his best mood upon 'But the word of the Lord is not bound'—never was the truth of an assertion more fully verified by the hearer's feelings."⁷

IGNATIUS PIGMAN

This thumbnail sketch grew out of Snethen's admiration kindled by the able debate in the General Conference of 1820 on the constitutionality of electing presiding elders. He does not mention names, but does particularize their arguments and commends "the immense display of art on both sides of this two-day clash of skill and argument." He was stirred by the ability of the Maryland debaters: "This is a brilliant period for the shores of Chesapeake, and the Baltimore Conference. The mantles of our Pigmans and Cassells have again fallen upon the favorite sons of Maryland."⁸

"Ignatius Pigman, one of the early Methodist preachers, was a natural rather than a self-taught orator. At one period of his life, by a train of untoward circumstances, he became obnoxious to a considerable degree of public prejudice and censure; and yet at that very time in his native place, surrounded by his greatest opposers, such was the power of his eloquence, that he could work upon their feelings in a manner which surprised and confounded them. His surviving hearers to this day give him the precedence of all other speakers. There seems to be sufficient evidence to induce us to place him among the great natural orators who have appeared in different ages and countries. . . . We might safely pronounce the shores of the Chesapeake to be a native country of orators. Men, women and children, learned and unlearned, rich and poor, can all relate anecdotes of the effects of Mr. Pigman's preaching. . . . Mr. Pig-

⁷ "Senex" in *Wesleyan Repository*, Vol. 1, December 20, 1821. Also *Snethen on Lay Representation*, p. 81, Nicholas Snethen.

⁸ *Snethen on Lay Representation*, p. 97, Nicholas Snethen.

man was once preaching on the commons of Baltimore, and in illustrating the joys of the converted penitent, he introduced a sailor, who after a long and tempestuous voyage descries land, but using a landman phrase. A sailor who was lying on the grass sprang up and cried out in his wonted tone, 'Land hoo'." ⁹

PRUDENCE GOUGH OF PERRY HALL

"The death of Mrs. Prudence Gough, relict of Henry Dorsey Gough, Esq., of Perry Hall, is an event entitled to some public record, not only on account of her personal virtues but on account of her conspicuous place among that goodly company of women . . . no less distinguished for their wealth and standing in society than for their piety and zeal for the interests of religion." Referring to this type of women "in and about Baltimore," he says, "The ministry of Mr. Asbury contributed towards the conversion or spiritual establishment of most of these worthy females." "It seems to us the sex hold nearly the same relation in spiritual as in domestic society. They are in some sense the home of religious community." This is another hint of Snethen's social vision of the importance of local community life in religious organization. "Mrs. Gough took precedence in point of wealth and was perhaps second to no one among them in the amiable and social qualities of heart. In no instance do we recollect to have observed than among them, more equanimity and docility of disposition, stronger marks of religious sincerity or more lively and steady friendship. . . . She must needs have had her favorites among the preachers; but none suffered any marks of her neglect. She treated them all with respect and those she did not praise, she did not censure. Few among them sojourned in the neighborhood of her hospitable mansion without partaking of her hospitable board. Frank, sincere and polite in her attentions, nothing was suffered to transpire in the largest companies of her religious friends, to diminish the satisfaction and delight of any one. The society of this benevolent and accomplished woman, invariably had a tendency to heighten our good will towards men. It was highly exhilarating to our piety to see so much

⁹ *Ibid.*

of the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ with so little respect of persons. . . . For the last twenty odd years of her life, which includes the period of our acquaintance, it was not whispered in our hearing that ever her heart was lifted up to vanity and it is certain that her diligence in religious duties was unremitting. . . . She neither sought nor accepted any precedence or distinction in the Church, and at the very time when we had reason to think that she was not a whit behind any of her sisters in purpose and endeavor, we have heard her complain that she could not follow with equal steps. . . . If we had depended upon her own lips for the information we should never have known she was rich. In her dress she was a pattern of plainness; the law of kindness was upon her lips; and the natural cheerfulness of her disposition made all cheerful about her.”¹⁰

“NEGRO SCHOOLMASTER”

Snethen tells his readers that he wishes to record this biographical recollection to keep the name of the Rev. George Dougherty from passing into oblivion. He was writing in 1823, nineteen years after seeing Dougherty for “the last time.” This preacher was “well-known and much beloved” in South Carolina in his active days, and received little more notice than a brief record of his name in conference minutes. Snethen calls him an “indefatigable preacher,” useful and of great moral integrity. He speaks of his “ardent pursuit of knowledge,” chiefly in study of the dead languages, but thought he allowed a luxuriance of imagination to overpower his judgment.

Dougherty took a deep interest in the slaves in his parish, which Bishop Asbury had instructed him to do, but not to overlook their masters. He not only labored for the Negro adults but organized a school for the children, and became known as the “Negro Schoolmaster.” His success in this incited the jealousy and alarm of the whites, and one Sunday night before the evening service in front of his church, to which he had been appointed, a mob seized him and drenched him at the town pump on Church Street near the corner of Cumberland Street, Charleston, South Carolina. This

¹⁰ “Philocharis” in *Wesleyan Repository*, Vol. 2, November, 1822.

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appeared to satisfy them, and Dougherty, with no loss of composure, and with occasional pleasantry, would relate this event while he continued his parish service.

The following minute description of Dougherty by Snethen is very interesting. Though nearly twenty years after, this description would enable an artist to draw a good likeness from Snethen's word picture of this preacher dropping away into oblivion: "No preacher could appear in the pulpit with fewer advantages of the prepossessing kind than Mr. Dougherty. Of his dress he was, in general, uncommonly negligent. A coarse, lead-colored coat, a kind of bear-skin; a neck-cloth without stiffening; and his linen unconcealed by a sham, exposed with their full effect, his hollow breast, long neck and round stooping shoulders. His face was thin, and his hair without the least appearance of taste in cutting or combing; his skin, though fair, and unusually heightened with a hectic flush, was much pitted with smallpox; and he had lost an eye. His manner of carrying his head was never graceful, and commonly leaning forward and to one side. His voice was bad and unmanageable, a kind of half-shrill, monotonous drawl, sometimes suddenly interrupted as if by a falter or impediment. But his remaining eye was a fine, beautiful member. Its color, I think, such as is called a dark hazel, not black. I have seldom seen an eye with more sweetness, combined with intelligence; never, I am sure, one which has left a more lasting impression on my imagination. It was interesting to see the great and good soul looking out of the only window in the leaning turret of this unornamented temple."¹¹

Chapter Two

PARAGRAPHS

SLAVERY

SNETHEN inherited slaves on his farm at Linganore, and worked with them as well as gave them oversight. He gave them their

¹¹ *Wesleyan Repository*, Vol. 3, pp. 161-165.

freedom from time to time as he was able to do so, under the existing laws of manumission, we are told. Snethen was inclined to take a long view of the gripping vices and wrongs of human society and to favor the longer remedial process for their elimination. He was unacquainted evidently with our familiar use of the term social evolution, but he was not unfamiliar with the idea later developed by such minds as Herbert Spencer and Benjamin Kidd. He grappled with the terrible vice of slavery, theoretically and practically, for he saw in it ominous future consequences. He proposed in a short article in August, 1822, a strange step for one with Quaker blood in his veins—it must have been from a chromosome in his father's line—for dealing with this evil at its source. He signed this article, "Homo Sum." Snethen finds illustration of the favorite maxim, "Follow Providence" in the Gospel propagation subsequent to the advance of the Roman army around the Mediterranean world. "That world into which the apostles of Jesus Christ were sent had been conquered by Roman valor and discipline. Thus was providence followed then; why not follow it now?" He points out that the British Government in the five-power alliance within the Holy Alliance could not suppress the slave trade, nor could the Vatican with all its thunders prevent "their spiritual and temporal subjects from trading in African flesh and blood." He sees the strength of the evil system in the fact that the "mighty conquerors of Waterloo, who had dictated peace to France, could not rescue the poor slave out of a paltry shallop sailing under false colors," oratory in Parliament was unavailing. The Court of St. James's with all its conquered subjects, its victories and laurels, its triumphs in benevolence, "succumbed to the slave trader."

He thinks slavery has developed out of other vices, and is now the essence of them all and should be divided and turned against itself. Savagism is not to be recovered by a simple direct process. "Put arms into the hands of the African negro in his native country and teach him to defend himself and thus make a patriot of him." If African armed black patriots could be sent among the natives they would have an influence that would break down "the propensity of their countrymen to barter human flesh for transatlantic toys." He appeals to Americans insisting that the first lesson to be taught these black men is "how to defend themselves, and

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with driving out slave dealers among them, they will be led to respect and love each other; they will become patriots and our native note, 'live, free or die,' will be heard in Africa." He closes this article signed with the words "Homo Sum"—I am a man—with this stirring summons to action: "Africa is in moral chaos, there the human mind is without form and void and darkness covers the face of it. Let your heralds, your precursors, be patriot soldiers and sailors. Raise up the courage of these prone animals, teach them to feel like men. True Christians can only be made out of beings who are conscious that they are men."¹²

He was no armchair enthusiast only, in this cause, nor were other Methodist leaders either. Ten years before this article was written the district conference was held in Leesburg, Virginia, the minutes of which are signed by "William McKendree" and "Nicholas Snethen, Secretary." This conference adopted two regulations on slavery and in the preamble of this action taken, reaffirmed "the rules on slavery." The two regulations adopted provided, first that in case of any members purchasing a slave or slaves, the assistant preacher is to appoint a committee of five members to determine length of service the slave is to render and if there is complaint, an appeal may be made to the quarterly meeting. The second provided that if a member owning a slave or slaves sells them in violation of this decision described in the first regulation, that he shall be expelled, except it can be made to appear to a committee of five members appointed by the preacher in charge of the circuit or station to be a case of mercy or necessity. There are a number of actions recorded in the minutes of the "Quarter Conferences" held on various points of the Frederick Circuit, Maryland, such as Linganore, Israel Creek, demonstrating the spirit of humanity and Christian principle in handling the buying and selling and manumitting of slaves among Methodist Church members.¹³

THE AMERICAN INDIAN

Snethen's five lectures appearing in Volume III of *Wesleyan Repository* show wide reading on the subject and original observation

¹² *Wesleyan Repository*, Vol. 2, pp. 152-155.

¹³ Minute Book of the "Proceedings of the Quarterly Conference held at Linganore Chapel," now in Westminster Theological Seminary Library.

and thinking. He traces the work of the Jesuits in Brazil, Canada, in California and the Southwest; discusses the missions of Eliot and Brainerd among the Indians within the United States, and the character of the missionary work being carried on by the Methodists among the aborigines which he does not fully endorse, believing it to be too narrowly confined to the religious purpose. Snethen always held that the finer things in any civilization, "its politeness," etc., though such could not be identified with true religion, were closely akin and could be utilized in opening the way for understanding and embracing the Christian faith. He thought this applied to the American Indian, and he felt the approach and appeal being made by the Methodists were ineffective and that missionary work among the American Indians called for art as well as the literacy and religious presentation; that their dances are expressive of their lives, "a kind of pantomime representation, and this is particularly true of the war dance." He reasons that there might be introduced an agricultural dance and "the dance of the arts." He felt these would appeal to the Indian and create within him a new form of dramatic excitement and open the way for a more effective influence in lifting him out of his long periods of drab and benumbing existence—awaken his mind.

"The eye of uncivilized man is no doubt the true index of the state of his brain and is one of the first avenues through which we can obtain access to it. The absence of the images of agriculture and the arts leaves their minds entirely under the influence of war and the chase. Unexcited by hunger and revenge and their short-lived animal pleasures, an almost paralytic stupor settles on their brain." He would try to excite their interest in cookery, music and painting, which they needed to "lift them out of their filth." He believed, however, that "the ministers of the Gospel are the proper persons to be employed in these important missions, and highly approved" instruction to "big children as well as little ones; but we cannot suppose that a sufficient degree of excitement can be produced of these means alone, to insure a practical course of civil and religious conduct."¹⁴ Not so novel to us now, though it was written a century and a quarter ago when it may have been thought fantastic by many of his readers.

¹⁴ *Wesleyan Repository*, Vol. 3, pp. 213-217.

SANCTIFICATION

As a boy this writer heard not a little discussion of this subject by persons from the various walks of life: farm neighbors who had religious interests, the saints in prayer meetings, and a number of clergymen. The connotation of the word "sanctification" among the inchoate religious thoughts of a boy's mind, as he heard the doctrine advanced and controverted, left much confusion on the subject. It was difficult for youth to understand how a teaching aimed at goodness should create so many heated contentions and how one who claimed to have achieved a settled state of superior goodness could be so intolerant and so frequently difficult to live with. It was a decided relief to him early in manhood to discover that John Wesley also had had difficulty with this matter and that the older he grew the less dogmatic he became about it, and summed it up in Jesus' first great commandment of love. It was not an unimportant practical issue in a religious people, however, who stressed Christian experience. While psychology has deepened our understanding and clarified our use of terms in talking about man and his spiritual being, the main issue in this particular religious discussion is still a live one. Integration of personality is a modern and more realistic phrase, and it includes the crux of this matter. Our modern life is suffering incalculable loss by failure to recognize that the Christian faith is an essential factor in this achievement of integrating life.

Nicholas Snethen was vitally interested in this doctrine. He once dedicated a discourse on sanctification to local preachers whose authorship was designated "By One of Their Brethren." This was his text: "And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and may your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved until the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." He said: "The terms spirit, soul and body in the text seem to be intended to embrace the whole man. . . . We shall adopt the artificial classification of mental, moral and body faculties, capabilities or capacities, instead of spirit, soul and body as embracing all the parts of the whole man. . . . It may be difficult, if not impossible, to define the precise limits of each genus and species and to demonstrate where the one ends and the other begins; so insensibly do many of the distinctions in nature

blend as they approach to each other. . . . There is no infallibility of mind connected with any stage of religious experience. We are not saved from ignorance or error simultaneously with our salvation from sin by grace through faith. Our religious manners and habits of body are not formed by faith alone but must needs have some dependence upon ourselves and our works. A lazy man clothed in rags will do quite as much toward procuring himself decent apparel by work as by faith. When, therefore, sanctification by faith alone is spoken of, should it not be restricted to the moral faculties, to the tempers and dispositions of the heart? . . . Excepting self-denial, is there any means which will equally contribute to promote the improvement of all the faculties? Self-denial is a universal and uniform badge of Christian discipleship; but it is rather negative than positive; its effects are mostly preventive; it adds little when alone to any of the faculties. . . . Is it not evident for the want of some sufficiently correct classification of the faculties or parts of the whole man, that a forced construction has been, sometimes, put upon particular doctrines and principles? The taking a part for the whole; and confounding of parts has contributed to render the subject of sanctification doubtful and uncertain to those not biased by a particular hypothesis. Men who are in the habit of paying attention to facts and not opinions or prejudices, cannot reconcile with the state of facts the sweeping clause of salvation by faith without works, which they often have applied without any reference to the complex nature of man, as though he had neither body or mind; but were altogether moral. . . . Is it not better to say at once that the mental faculties are not sanctified in the same manner as the moral ones, than to take the round-about method of showing negatively and positively what Christian perfection is not and what it is? Why is it not? Evidently because love, pure love, in which it consists, is an operation of the moral faculties that may be produced by grace through faith, while the mental faculties experience little or no direct influence from these causes. No evangelist ever thinks of teaching men to pray that through faith alone they may be able to read the bible; but if they do not know how to read they must learn how. . . . If the bible is in another language, it must be translated. . . . Let no one say that these assertions frustrate the grace of God, unless they will take

it upon themselves to prove that Christians and scholars may be made by the same process. . . . The mind is purified from ignorance and error by the knowledge and application of elementary truths and this is the only way, under heaven, by which it can be thus saved. . . . Let us beware how we confound inspiration with sanctification."

In another connection he says: "A cool head is a very desirable accompaniment of a warm heart, and according to our notion in the sanctification of the mind, the head is cleared and cooled in proportion of its operation." It would be strange indeed if the operation of the grace of God in the human heart did not "perceptibly" expand and strengthen the intellect and give new material and "medium" for its operation, but a "weak reasoner will remain a weak reasoner still, his holiness to the contrary notwithstanding. We have known many instances of the best men laboring hard to elicit ideas from the fervor of devotion, but it seemed to us that they have labored in vain. And such instances will perpetually occur unless a general conviction can be produced that a devout heart does not make a logical mind—that our intellectual powers are sanctified by a different process."¹⁵

While the quotation submitted is concerned with replying to a person holding a different view from Snethen, and does not present the full scope of his thinking on the subject, it reveals the trend of his views. Snethen believed that in Christian redemption there is a righteousness of God, made available to man through the grace and work of Christ, to be realized in man's individual and social life, by faith, through the ministry and power of the Spirit of God.

ALCOHOLISM

"Of all the vices which degrade human nature no one appears to be more incurable than drunkenness; and, no one certainly extends its ravages more widely over all faculties of body and mind. . . . We have no faith in any prescription as a universal remedy for drunkenness, either as a preventive or a cure. We shall therefore only attempt to point out a few of the most obvious correctives

¹⁵ *Wesleyan Repository*, Vol. 1, pp. 361-366; 418, 419.

for the young." He mentions the effect of drink upon the body, shortening life, the peril of association with drinking and the ramification of this habit in his day, the drams and bitters, toddies and punches, wines and cordials in private families until "every child in the family must taste and sip as a matter of course." He specifies the tavern and retail shop "accessible by day and by night to our boys. Sailors, waggoners, fishermen, harvesters and haymakers, make no exceptions when the bottle goes round, in favor of the youngest in the company. . . . It does not seem that hell and damnation have many terrors for drunkards. The pulpit indeed, must, as it is duty bound, do all it can to work upon any degree of hope and fear in this infatuated and deluded class of men, but all the wisdom, prudence and perseverance which the friends of humanity can combine, ought to be put in operation to countervail an evil so fatal to individuals and to society. The labors of our country are in general too severe and too long continued and our manner of living too gross. It would be a sound system of political economy to introduce habits of diligence and industry and moderate wages. . . . A good general state of health, peace and contentment of mind and steady habits of industry are great preservatives against intemperance. While strongly agitated passions, fatigue, depression of spirit, anxiety, indolence and bad company, not only lead but hurry and precipitate men into terrible temptation; and when once the balance between inclination and volition is destroyed, the most fearful consequences are to be dreaded. . . .

"Drunkenness is a poison—a real disease, which may soon be rendered incurable. . . . Would it not be well to imbue the minds of children with correct sentiments and principles upon this most important, because most dangerous, of all subjects—this calamity of which we stand in jeopardy every hour?"¹⁶

"Men of science in all that immediately concerns the body and soul, it is evident, must unite in this great work of temperance. . . . This is a proper field for research and discovery. . . . Our doctors and professors of divinity and of medicine must unite and form for the use of juvenile temperance societies and adult novitiates, a temperance catechism combining the elements or principles of all knowledge extant respecting alcoholic intoxication."¹⁶

¹⁶ *Christian World*, Vol. 1, August, 1841.

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DREAMS

Sigmund Freud was born in the decade following Snethen's death, but the latter had been interested in the field in which the former became distinguished. Snethen was not a trained psychologist though his power and habit of observing mental phenomena led him in that direction. He once discussed dreams in an article on "Thoughts on Scripture Dreams" in which he quotes from French authorities and reaches the conclusion that metaphysicians do "not agree" and states that the "theory of dreams still remains unsettled among philosophers." He himself observed that we never dream in sound sleep. He seeks to classify Scripture dreams and says, "Every Scripture dreamer seems to have dreams according to his character and condition." That is, kings dream like kings, soldiers like soldiers, parents like parents. He discusses the dreams of Pharaoh, Nebuchadnezzar, Jacob, Joseph, and declares, "The most remarkable dream mentioned in the Scriptures is the Song of Solomon—a delicate, chaste and beautiful dream." He lays down what he thinks to be a general rule: "Be generous of waking thoughts but sparing of sleeping ones."¹⁷

AN APOSTROPHE

This writer recalls that when he joined a college literary society in the closing decade of the nineteenth century, among the skeleton patterns for the weekly programs, orations, essays, eulogies, prophecies, debates, etc., was the "Apostrophe," in which the performer turned from his audience to address an object in history or even an abstract idea which he wished to exalt. This form of public speech became obsolescent. It was too stilted and formal, too much of an archaism for the trend toward a more free and conversational style of public speaking which would characterize the new century. Snethen occasionally used the apostrophe with telling effect to further an argument or appeal. The following is an apostrophe used by him during the Methodist Reform debate. It illustrates what Bishop James H. Straughn in his Founder's Day Address at Drew University in November, 1940, calls Snethen's "Americanism"

¹⁷ *Wesleyan Repository*, Vol. 3, pp. 233-236.

which the Bishop rightly asserts was an interlocking theme with "Christian Liberty."¹⁸

"O America. O My Country! Thou art free. The title to thy soil is in the hands of thy children and not in oligarchies of priests and nobles. Our national existence was begun right. We have no titles to trace to a conqueror. Our lands and our citizens have never been parcelled out to civil or religious adventurers. Yet strange as it may appear, a feudal claim to the government of the Methodist Church has been set up."¹⁹

Chapter Three

PROVERBS

SNETHEN's utterances are replete with maxims and short paragraphs of truth under discussion, and put into clear and succinct phrasing. They flash out like crystals along a sunlit beach. Apparently this was not rhetorical embellishment, wrought for its own sake, but the natural result from the way his mind worked on a subject.

Proverbs from the earliest literature down to the present have had a place. Aside from the delight and benefit to the reader, they are lighted apertures to the author's mental acumen, his seasoned reflection upon life about him and in him, to the principles and ideals he holds and cherishes, and to the soundness of his judgment on the issues of life.

This collection is from two sources chiefly—first, from his writing in the *Wesleyan Repository* and *Mutual Rights* papers, and second, from his sermons. However, the first list did not exclusively originate from the discussions on church reform, for he treated many other subjects than this one during his retirement at Lingapore, though to it he devoted the most of his thinking at this period in his life.

¹⁸ Drew University Bulletin, Vol. 29, p. 25.

¹⁹ Snethen on Lay Representation, p. 241, Nicholas Snethen.

FIRST

"Half rights in legislation are wrong."

"When men do as they would be done by, states and churches are free."

"Genuine social love is alone the offspring of mutual rights."

"Vetoës carry in them the seeds and germs of ruin and desolation."

"Men are given to change but principles are immortal."

"The best of men ought not to be trusted with unnecessary powers and prerogatives."

"The Gospel does not enfeeble either the body or the mind."

"Military discipline itself is not sufficient for the purpose of civil government."

"The wisdom, the perfection, the glory of all government consists in the government of free men."

"Liberty and equality among believers is a theme on which the apostles delighted to dwell."

"When sincerity becomes indocile, it becomes criminal."

"Thoughts which suffer no collision generally remain unpolished."

"The mind in solitude is stupefied and sanctified."

"The age of martyrdom must needs be a corrupt and degenerate one."

"The only medium through which we can discover Christianity is Christian morality."

"The art of raising a blush is the art of promoting virtue."

"No man or order of men has a right to make laws for its members without their consent."

"The ministry was made for the church, not the church for the ministry."

"Mankind are sparing of their flattery toward those of whom they have nothing to hope and from whom they have nothing to fear."

"In nothing is the hierarchical spirit of our government (Methodist) more evident than in the disposition to check free inquiry."

- "A disposition to improve an improvable subject is always more commendable than tenacity of mere ancestral opinions."
- "Men who believe do not make haste. The light of truth is progressive. It is passion that is always in a hurry."
- "There is very little philosophy among the people in any age or country."
- "When the fear to act becomes habitual, the power to act is gone and with it all self-confidence."
- "A spirit of fear may be given or superinduced by a system of education or government."
- "The higher a man is elected to office, the more carefully ought he to be bound by principle."
- "Ambition is like gravity and can be only overcome by opposing force to force, resistance to resistance."
- "Genius cannot be drilled by a recruiting sergeant. True genius is no eye-servant."
- "It is injudicious to proscribe the reading of any book merely because its contents do not coincide with our opinion."
- "An ignorant man does not become wise by a transition from one time and place to another."
- "It has long been a favorite maxim with me that the Gospel should be to a preacher what matter is to the naturalist—the subject of his investigation and not his creation."
- "The degree of freedom in every country is found to be in proportion to the degree it has freed itself from patriarchal power or has substituted laws in place of it."
- "The darkest and most desperate systems of tyranny have always been most fruitful of espionage."
- "A good government must be predicated upon principles and not upon imaginary rights and virtues of men in office."
- "I can never be brought to believe, that it argues for any extraordinary sagacity in men to take for themselves and their successors as much power to do good as is possible, without regard to the power which it would give them to do evil."

SECOND

"Ignorance is naturally cruel."

"Instruction is a slow process. It takes from time what it lacks in direct force."

"Unbelief is a non-conductor of historical knowledge."

"The mind was made for faith and faith was made for mind."

"Faith produces in our minds effects answering to sight."

"Some who think least, feel most."

"Faith has no power to make error true nor wrong right."

"Where a man's trust is there will be his gratitude."

"The highest emotion of gratitude inspires the deepest humility."

"Praise is given to God but good is done to men."

"A good work is never an offset to the demerit of sin."

"Happiness cannot exist without self-consistency and self-consistency is attested by conscience."

"The grace of God does nothing contrary to the testimony of a good conscience."

"Ignorance is not truth nor the parent of truth. The whole intellectual nature must be brought under the yoke of the meek and lowly Jesus."

"Faith in written revelation is progressive—'from faith to faith'—from the faith of Abraham to the faith of Moses."

"Theology will never become profound among a people whose taste is false and vicious."

"The peculiar mode of genius called taste appertains to religion and morals as well as letters."

"Good and bad habits are rewards and punishments in this world."

"Pride and opinion of our own merits may use the language of praise to God but can never feel gratitude."

"Books not only communicate thought but they make thinkers."

"Ambition is too general and too genial to the human heart to allow any long interregnum after love ceases."

"Gospel ministers, above all others, ought to be cautious of the

manner of spirit in which they allow themselves to pass judgment involving church membership."

"If experimental religion were not historically true how could believing make it true?"

"The power of our bodies and minds, as our substance, are all more or less communicable and may be employed in doing good."

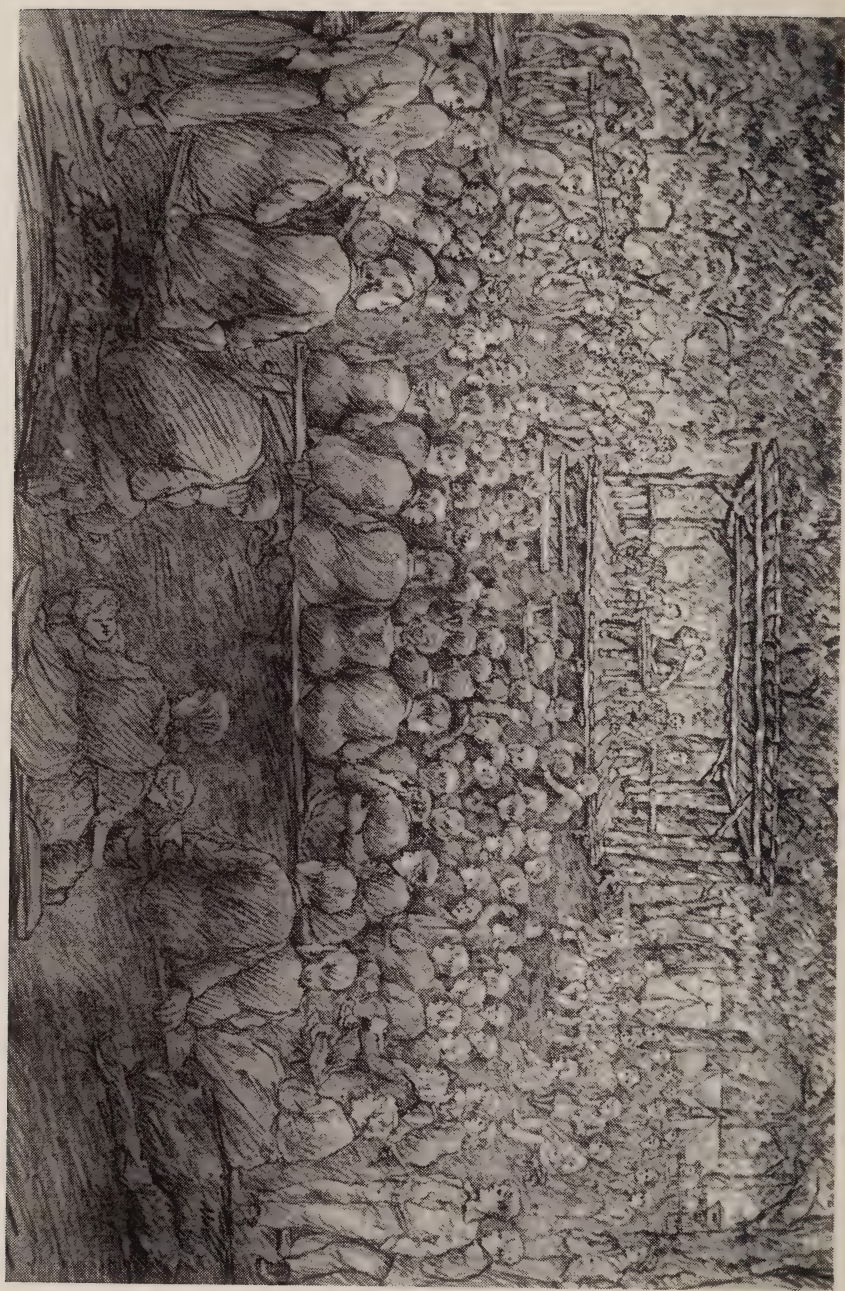
"Industry and economy become important virtues; indolence and extravagance become vices in our social system."

"Repentance is an act of homage to law and conscience."

"When we deal dishonestly with our consciences, our consciences too are apt to be treacherous."

"The rights of private judgment and private action are difficult to be adjusted in the way of compromise among equals."

"A man who has any regard for his character would be ashamed to say that he neither does nor will believe the truth."



PART FIVE

PREACHER OF THE GOSPEL

"I desire to place on record at the close of my life, my profound Faith in the Christian Religion. I believe that the future of the human race and the highest individual character are dependent upon realizing in life, consciously or unconsciously, the spirit of our Lord and Master, Jesus Christ."—*From the will of Professor Waterman Thomas Hewett.*

Chapter One

THE MASTER PASSION

THE weather-worn marble monument to Nicholas Snethen in the old Warnok Cemetery at Princeton, Indiana, bears this fading inscription from Romans, the fifteenth chapter and nineteenth verse: "I have fully preached the Gospel of Christ." Presumably this declaration of St. Paul is on that stone as an estimate of Snethen's lifework by either himself or his family.

He was a recognized author in dictionaries of British and American literature when few American Methodist ministers had been given this distinction. He was an editor for a brief period; a farm owner in active agricultural pursuits; served as Chaplain in Congress; participated in Maryland political life for a few years; and in his later years produced several books, and was engaged in the field of education, late in his life, for which he was well fitted, by his remarkable acquisition of knowledge, aptness and ability in classroom lectures. He had been an outstanding voice and influence in his generation for democracy in church government in Methodism.

All this was subordinate to his work as a preacher of the Gospel. From the day he joined John Dow's class in Belleville, New Jersey, in 1792, to the end of his life, his chief purpose was to preach the Gospel of Christ. Wherever he was, whether an active itinerant, or a local preacher settled in his home and the local church and community, he was constantly responding to invitations to preach the Gospel according to his Methodist experience. He preached this on the country circuit and in the great camp meetings, in notable pulpits of the large cities. He had preached it among the hills and vales of New England, along the Maryland creeks and across its rolling wheatlands, in the red-stone frontier country of

western Pennsylvania, down through the "Old Dominion" valleys and among the rugged hills of western Virginia, up into the still more rugged region of East Tennessee and north into the "dark and bloody ground" of middle Kentucky, southward to Augusta, Georgia, and Charleston, South Carolina, and back to Baltimore. He had preached this Gospel in New York City, Philadelphia, Richmond, Pittsburgh, Cincinnati and Louisville, and when he preached it was with the sound purpose to effect a change in the thinking and souls of his hearers and not to entertain with his exceptional pulpit gifts. The common people "heard him gladly" and the more cultured and exacting listeners were greatly pleased and moved. Preaching the Gospel was his master passion. He relates in connection with his effort to reproduce sermons in writing that he had preached before, that often two or three days before he had preached some of these sermons, he was fairly consumed with his sense of message and its urge to delivery. He deservedly ranks as one of America's notable extemporaneous preachers in the nineteenth century. He once said, when past sixty years old, "that voice and memory were the two things needful to extemporary preaching" and were the two things "soonest to fail" in old men. He deplored the prejudice among the Methodists to written sermons which "tends to deprive old preachers of the habit of many years."¹

Snethen was endowed with a voice of unusual pleasing and carrying quality. It was arresting and penetrating. This was the universal testimony by Asbury and many contemporaries. Asbury denominated him "his silver trumpet." Bishop McKendree, himself a preacher of singular power, compared Snethen to the Ohio River, and in his simile on Snethen's preaching characterizes it with clearness, depth, swift movement and a "silvery voice." An intriguing homiletical criticism, is this, from America's first native Methodist bishop whose course in homiletics was taken on horseback on the frontier.

Dr. George Brown in his "Recollections" tells of an incident which took place in a General Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church at Cincinnati, Ohio. It happened while Orange Scott

¹ *Methodist Protestant*, Vol. 1, November 9, 1832.

was delivering his "great abolition argument." Snethen, an elderly man now, was attending as a visitor and in the back of the church met the Rev. W. Burke, prominent in early Methodism, especially in Ohio, and an old itinerant friend. They fell into an absorbing conversation, telling of early experiences, and found much merriment in describing to each other the patched clothes they had to wear to cover their nakedness. Snethen told of a dream he had in which he found himself with no clothes at all. The two men were unconscious of the many persons around the room listening in on these itinerants "swapping" experiences. Orange Scott stopped his address and smiled. The bishop presiding looked about the room, and smiled. Snethen's silvery voice had betrayed him. This incident illustrates also his naturalness and freedom from self-consciousness.

Phillips Brooks's terse and universally acceptable definition of preaching is peculiarly adaptable to Nicholas Snethen: "Truth through personality." He was a habitual searcher for truth anywhere he could find it in the Scriptures, science, history, philosophy, literature, in nature, personal and social experience, and he sought to live out the truth discovered as opportunity came. Augustus Webster, a man of excellent learning and marked force of character, writing from Baltimore in August, 1846, the summer following Snethen's decease, said in this letter that he was "a liberal and devoted Christian" and a preacher "who effected much toward the popularity and usefulness of American Methodism." He was a constant and wide reader, endowed with strong powers of memory that gave to him an inexhaustible store of information and illustration; and an alert observer of nature and people which added to his homiletical resources. This, together with his own inimitable spoken style and an integrated personality, with grace of manner in the pulpit, mental poise, ready utterance and chaste diction, and an inward excitement before a congregation, combined with a magnetic physical presence, made him an eminent public speaker, who had dedicated his God-like gift, as the ancients thought of it, to the work of the Gospel. Where is to be found a nobler art than good preaching? The most conservative and experienced of his hearers spoke of his "overwhelming eloquence."

Snethen's valuation of "feelings" in personality is frequently expressed. He considered this, as did Beecher later, an important

element in religious experience and vital to good preaching; a factor in determining both a satisfactory style of expression and an effective delivery. But one must not think he was given to artifice for that was foreign to his spirit and practice. He was natural and free, sometimes dramatic, making a direct appeal like John Henry Jowett to different groups in his audience, or he rose to an eloquent apostrophe, or recalled an experience of racy humor that produced a contagion of pleasantry.

He was intellectually honest, comprehensive, and discriminating in his thinking, definite and usually clear in statement. He had theological backbone and was never criticized for being unorthodox. He was liberal in spirit and charitable to diversity of opinion. Like Wesley, certain basic truth being accepted, religious opinion was granted a broad field. He was a biblical preacher, and having searched his texts for the truth they were intended to convey, and having selected the phase he would pursue, he was off on its exploration and application. He put large emphasis upon historical Christianity and made much of divine redemption being rooted in history. He accepted the Bible as the word of God, but as it was a part of universal literature, it was to be studied and interpreted in the light of universal truth as found in history, science, political and social philosophies; in the light of personal and social experience and particularly of the Church of Christ. It is to be noted that he ascribed Pauline authorship to the Book of Hebrews and seems to have discovered evidences of documentary elements in the Old Testament. This was some time before the epoch of Julius Wellhausen. He was spiritually minded, mentally alert, morally in earnest, fearless in holding to his convictions and tactful in their presentation. He was sympathetic with those in sorrow and human need, loved human beings, white and black, poor and rich, learned and ignorant, youth and age—humanity. He was engaging with his variety of approach to his themes by illustrations from history, nature, science, human experience, or by an interrogation. He could point a discussion with cogent reasoning to end in forceful application, and a persuasiveness was present in his delivery. Saurin was his favorite author among sermonizers for the reason that he taught him how to evade monotony in the presentation of truth.

The Snethen sermons extant may not reveal some of these quali-

ties, and we must rely upon contemporary testimony since he was an extemporaneous preacher. It is not easy to get on record all that goes into extemporaneous speaking—the flash of the eye, animation of face and person, the impromptu word, the interjectional phrase, the often unconscious gesture, and the constant interaction between speaker and hearers.

Scarcely any of this is ordinarily preserved. When the practice of writing out a discourse shortly after its delivery is followed, there is probably achieved the substance of the preacher's thinking in his best phrasing for public speaking. Frederick Robertson made a priceless contribution to sermon literature by this practice. Modern technology, of course, has greatly increased the facility for reproducing an address. It is believed that accounts by eyewitnesses and critics will not only sustain but add to the estimate here given of Snethen as a Christian preacher.

Chapter Two

HIS WRITTEN SERMONS

SNETHEN, in response to friendly demands and without doubt to an inner urge, undertook to write out twenty-two of his sermons which he had earlier preached with good effect. He set apart the months of January, February and March in 1838 while he was in Cincinnati, Ohio, to do this. He was sixty-nine years of age. They were published by Ulysses Ward of Washington, District of Columbia, in 1846, a year after his death, with Worthington Garrettson Snethen for editor, who was a practicing attorney in the capital city. This book of sermons bears a Scripture imprint that is significant: "Gather up the fragments that nothing be lost." He discovered that very much was to be lost in trying as an extemporaneous preacher to reproduce sermons preached in earlier years. In the first place, memory was unable to recall many things, and he was quite unable to reproduce the feeling that accompanied

original expression of thought, which has a potent creative influence on one's language. He wrote frankly, as he would, of his experience in the letter which accompanied the manuscript sent to his son in Washington. The original manuscript of this book of sermons, now in the possession of Westminster Theological Seminary, was written with care so as to make them, as Snethen says, "legible." "The leading thoughts in them were connected with my most successful efforts." "A combination of circumstances led to the neglect of writing down these best sermons at the time of delivery though the main reason was this: I was not fully aware how memory would be affected by age." He said that his "primary feelings were past never to return." He speaks of "feeling power" in the early "extemporizing itinerant" and the natural decay of this with age and of the memory also. He wrote: "Sometimes for some days before I delivered these discourses which made the greatest impression upon hearers, my feelings burned within me with an almost unrestrainable ardor. In the midst of such emotions is the time to write, for then can one write as well as speak, which is impossible to do when they are wanting."²

In the "Preface" of this volume he has some things to say about preachers and preaching worthy the attention of the homiletic classroom, and his closing sentence is wholly Snethenesque: "Behold a specimen of his recollections."³ These sermons, as one critic who had heard Snethen preach put it, are scarcely more than full outlines of sermons; the skeleton being present but not much of the rest of the body.

Texts of Scripture and titles of sermons are usually interesting to preachers and to many lay people; also the books of the Bible from which the preacher selects his texts. Of these twenty-two sermons, Snethen chose one text each from First Timothy, Matthew, John, Acts, Second Corinthians, Genesis, Colossians, I John, Isaiah, Galatians; two from Philippians; five each from Romans and from Hebrews. The texts in order are as follows: First Timothy 2:5, 6; Matthew 5:2-3, 4; Romans 8:32; John 3:16; Acts 5:31; Romans 3:27-31; Romans 4:23-26; Second Corinthians 1:12;

² Letter written by Nicholas Snethen from Princeton, Ind., Oct. 31, 1843, to Washington G. Snethen, Washington, D. C. Printed in *Sermons of the Late Nicholas Snethen*.

³ *Ibid.*

Philippians 3:7-11; Genesis 14:24; Romans 10:1-4; Hebrews 1:7; Hebrews 11:24-26; Hebrews 6:18-20; Colossians 1:9-14; Philip-pians 3:12-14; First John 2:1-2; Hebrews 13:15, 16; Isaiah 12:1, 2; Romans 1:17; Hebrews 13:1; Galatians 4:4-7.

Corresponding to these texts are these sermon subjects: "The One Mediator," "The Poor in Spirit," "Free Grace," "Faith in the Son of God," "Gospel Repentance," "The Law of Faith," "Justifying Faith," "The Christian Character," "To Know Jesus Christ," "Religious Divisions," "God's Righteousness," "The Faith of Noah," "The Faith of Moses," "The Hope Set Before Us," "St. Paul's Desires," "The Resurrection," "That Ye Sin Not," "The Moral Sac-rifice," "The Day of Salvation," "The Progress of Faith," "The Law of Love," "The Spirit of Adoption."

These twenty-two sermons that he selected are not a sufficient number to make a final judgment of the range of his preaching but they are indicative. They are on the great themes of Christian truth and experience: faith, hope, love, the grace of God through the redemptive deed of Christ; the effect of this upon human life; love and unity, the goal of Christian fellowship.

Most preachers have some master motif or trumpet word that stands out in his preaching through the years, perhaps unintended, as with Beecher's emphasis upon love, Phillips Brooks upon life, John Caird upon truth and duty. Snethen's comprehending word was faith. His subjects grew out of the Scripture passages he chose for his text. He was a painstaking expositor and when he had seized upon the proposition he wished to treat, it was given a wide interpretation and development, with a definite application for he was devoted to practical religion. The three sermons which might possess the most reading interest for a modern reader would perhaps be: Discourse Second on "The Poor in Spirit"; and Discourse Thir-teen: "The Faith of Moses"; and Discourse Twenty-first: "The Law of Love." His sermon preached in 1816 at Linganore on the death of Francis Asbury was widely acclaimed for its eloquence of tribute and its truthfulness in estimate. It was a written sermon, printed copies having been preserved though the original in his own handwriting seems to have been lost.⁴

⁴ See Appendix for Sermon on Asbury.

Another lost written sermon was entitled "The Education of Daughters" which was preached in Light Street Church, Baltimore, in 1802. This sermon is said to have dealt with female education. Andrew Agate Lipscomb, himself a pioneer in the education of young women in the South, called Snethen "one of the pioneers, if not, perchance the pioneer, in the movement in behalf of female education which has so honorably distinguished Methodism."⁵

Chapter Three

EYEWITNESSES AND HEARERS

THERE are three persons—a larger number might be chosen—to give a final estimate of Snethen as a preacher: J. R. Williams, Ancel H. Bassett, Andrew A. Lipscomb. Williams was a contemporary with Snethen, being eleven years younger. He had heard him preach frequently, and was an intelligent and observing listener. Ancel H. Bassett was a younger man, but heard Snethen preach in his older years in Cincinnati, Ohio, and in that vicinity. Bassett, too, was an observant person, not easily moved and very reliable in what he said and recorded. Both of these men by their training, temperament and pursuits are well fitted to give trustworthy testimony on the point under discussion.

Andrew Agate Lipscomb was born in Georgetown, D. C., 1816, and was known as the "boy preacher" in and about Baltimore, Washington and Alexandria. He did not leave this vicinity until he was twenty-six, that is, in 1842. His father, William C. Lipscomb, was an intimate acquaintance of Nicholas Snethen and in all likelihood his son, being an unusually well-educated young man, and himself interested in preaching, heard Snethen preach. He speaks as though he was an eyewitness but does not say so outright.⁶

Williams wrote six months after Snethen died: "It is thought

⁵ Article in *Methodist Protestant*, August 7, 1880, "One of the Grand Old Fathers."

⁶ See Appendix for biographical notes.

by some that the labors of no one preacher among the Methodists have been more signally owned of God in the conversion of sinners and the building up of believers. . . . The doctrines he taught were evangelical and strictly Wesleyan but his style of preaching was peculiar to himself. It differed essentially from the manner of any other preacher we ever heard. As a field preacher he had no equal. His clear, elastic voice and fine manly appearance were admirably adapted to this kind of service. We have heard him preach to ten thousand persons on a camp ground and those on the outskirts could hear him distinctly. . . . Our beloved brother was the best informed and best read man of my acquaintance. He may be said to have been a walking encyclopedia.”⁷

Snethen is credited with introducing the camp meeting into Maryland and New York. No doubt he came into contact with this American frontier invention while traveling with Asbury. This spontaneous institution met some of the exigencies of frontier evangelism, when auditorium capacity was very limited and the facilities for daily living in a crowd were not developed. Authorities seem to agree that this institution was originated in 1799 by the Rev. John McGee, a Methodist, together with his brother, a Presbyterian, and another Presbyterian minister by the name of Hoge. The camp meeting spread among the Presbyterians and Baptists but chiefly among the Methodists who utilized it with good effect. Some writers mention Ocean Grove, New Jersey, Lakeside, Ohio, and Pacific Grove, California, as present-day developments of this frontier, forest-expedient, which the Methodists very fruitfully used to publish salvation and to promote religious culture among their people. Said Abel Stevens covering the period 1804-1820: “The Camp Meeting from the West was generally introduced from Bassett’s Woods in Delaware to Rembert’s in South Carolina and far beyond in Georgia.”⁸ He quotes Asbury’s vivid description of one of these forest camps where thousands of persons were recorded converted within a week who would go forth into various communities. J. R. Williams makes a striking comment on the fruitfulness of the camp meeting in his history written in 1843: “The unparalleled increase of Methodism from

⁷ *Methodist Protestant*, July 13, 1845.

⁸ *Compendium History of American Methodism*, Chap. 28, Abel Stevens.

the year 1800 up to the present period is fairly to be attributed to the introduction of camp meetings which first began in the state of Tennessee and then were introduced into Kentucky, the Carolinas and Georgia; and then into Maryland and New York.

These woods-meetings furnished the great desideratum, room and public attention. Thousands began to hear Methodist preaching who until then had only heard that a people who were called Methodists existed in different parts of the United States. The consequences, that instead of some ten or twenty converted in the course of a year in a vicinity, hundreds were brought to a saving knowledge of the truth and added to the church. . . . After 1800 the period of introduction of camp meetings the membership increased annually by thousands."⁹

Snethen saw in the American camp meeting an opportunity similar to that opening to Wesley in field meetings, which did so much to implement the messages of Methodism among the masses in England, and he took a leading part in its promotion. He once said that the camp meeting not only carried the Gospel into the enemy's country, but that it was advanced farther than by field preaching. He participated in these meetings in Maryland and Pennsylvania for twenty years.¹⁰ The records of the quarterly conferences of Frederick Circuit, Maryland, contain frequent mention of his name as a member of committees for locating and directing camp meetings on the property of various landowners in the vicinity of Israel and Pipe Creeks.

Probably he perceived that in the camp meeting he had an effective means for spreading the Gospel in addition to horseback riding, which he felt was carried to excess. That he did believe in a more settled life on the part of the Methodist ministry and a longer period of contact with community life by them, is seen in his effort to provide a parsonage on Frederick Circuit, Maryland, as early as 1808. He, with Alexander Warfield and five other trustees, arranged for the purchase of land in Liberty Town from Joseph Latham, and lease of property owned by Christian Cham-

⁹ *History of M. P. Church*, 1843, James R. Williams.

¹⁰ Bassett in his *Concise History*, p. 407, credits him with holding the first camp meeting in Maryland in 1803 and with being present at the first camp meeting in New York in 1804.

pion. "This was for the use of travelling Methodist preachers of the Methodist Episcopal Church" while traveling "the Frederick Circuit and no preacher shall occupy the said house and lot any longer than he continues to travel Frederick Circuit." ¹¹

Ansel H. Bassett reports that "Mr. Snethen was a man of extraordinary pulpit power." ¹² He tells of a personal experience he had on Friday, August 30, 1830, at a camp meeting being held ten miles east of Cincinnati. Asa Shinn had preached a memorable sermon on Thursday, using John 3:16 for his text. The next day Nicholas Snethen preached and announced for his text John 3:16. He courteously gave his reasons for taking this text, explaining to Shinn that he meant no offense. He proceeded to dwell upon salvation by faith which Shinn had not dealt with, which was a favorite theme with Snethen. The youthful listener writes in his account of that sermon that he could "never forget how pointedly the venerable preacher challenged infidelity to accept Christ—to believe and receive the record God hath given of his Son." He describes him lifting up the Bible and extending it toward the people with a prophetic emphasis and earnest plea: "Take the Book—it is God's message. Believe it—accept it—and be saved. Reject it at your own peril and die." Says Bassett: "The effect of this appeal was thrilling beyond description."

Dr. Andrew Agate Lipscomb wrote a critical estimate of Nicholas Snethen as a preacher after he had retired at Athens, Georgia. Lipscomb was ably qualified for this. This critique was written under the caption: "One of the Grand Old Fathers." ¹³ Upon examining Snethen's sermons Lipscomb finds evidences of his "intellectual power, creative ability, illustrative ingenuity, intense fervor and holy zeal." ¹⁴

He criticizes the leaving of his thoughts "stand apart" at times. This he thinks is a defect in his published sermon "The Mediator." This interrupts the flow and harmony of his thinking. This defect, the critic thinks, is likely due to his age and inability to reproduce

¹¹ "Court Records," Frederick County, Md., Liber W. R. 33, 208.

¹² *Concise History of the Methodist Protestant Church*, pp. 354-356, 407, Ansel H. Bassett.

¹³ See Appendix.

¹⁴ *Methodist Protestant*, July 10, 1880. "One of the Grand Old Fathers," A. A. Lipscomb.

the feeling and sustained thinking of his earlier years. He calls attention to Snethen's "interjectional sentence" that frequently and unexpectedly occurred in his preaching which produced a deep impression. He calls his manner "irresistible." "It was oratory in perfection—nothing studied, nothing of rules, but all of nature's laws—without the least art, as artificiality, and yet art itself in supreme excellence. . . . There was a depth of personality not only to his conceptions but in the way they disclosed themselves to his mind, and in the effort to impart them to others which was quite distinct from mere originality. His insight was broad while subtle. He had the peculiar gift of seeing at once into the kinship of an important thought and from its own sphere he widened it out into a large world. This was the source of that intellectual fervor which distinguished his method of thinking and it must not be confounded with other forms of emotion." ¹⁵

Lipscomb points out a combination of logic and imagination in Snethen, and pronounces this to be an "infallible sign of ability, sagacity and far-sightedness," and makes this strong statement: "No preacher of this country, so far as we know, has equalled him in the knowledge of our subtlest mental operations, . . . a great philosopher as well as great preacher. We rank him next to Jonathan Edwards as a profound thinker and regard him as a safer thinker than he." ¹⁶ Lipscomb possessed ample knowledge for writing a critical estimate and was no novice in such matters. One would not consider him loquacious, nor given to heroics. In his last article he describes Snethen as though he were sitting in a congregation seeing and hearing the preacher as he probably had: "His appearance, manner, voice had much to do . . . with the merely external aspects of his power. Everything about him betokened the orator in advance—the way he entered the pulpit, took his seat, rose to open the service—for the instinct of rhythmic life pervaded his person, whether in repose or in action. The first tones of his voice attracted attention. It was so peculiar with its

¹⁵ *Methodist Protestant*, July 24, 1880. "One of the Grand Old Fathers," A. A. Lipscomb.

¹⁶ *Methodist Protestant*, August 7, 1880. "One of the Grand Old Fathers," A. A. Lipscomb.

novelty, quite as much as its exquisite intonations that fascinated the ear. It was soft while full and it was always 'silvery.' ”¹⁷

One may repeat appropriately Phillips Brooks's profound definition of preaching, "truth through personality," which he himself so finely exemplified, as truly applicable to Nicholas Snethen, one of America's great extemporaneous preachers.¹⁸

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ See Appendix for Dr. Francis Waters' Resolutions, 1846.

PART SIX

APPRAISEMENT

Chapter One

EARLY PRAISE AND LATE CRITICISM

IF one could examine more of Snethen's intimate life to be found in letters to personal friends and in faithful diary keeping, one might multiply faults in him, for such records reveal both the spoiled and the unspoiled promptings in a human life and career. He kept no diary or journal so far as known, and the bulk of the large accumulation of his varied writings, with the extensive biography begun by his son and never completed, has been lost. Reliance must be placed upon snapshot revelation of facts about him that occur in his writings and in the records that remain, and upon those who wrote about him being eyewitnesses of what they "saw and heard."

Snethen was a picked man by native and acquired endowment; an exceptionally well-rounded personality, able to turn himself into many directions with accuracy and wealth of knowledge and with skill in pursuit. It has not been the intent of this writer to exalt unduly but to present a truthful estimate. That he possessed elements of greatness was early recognized. Asbury used the word "great" quite early in Snethen's ministry in writing about him. This opinion is apparent in his appointing him as a young preacher to the important station of Charleston, South Carolina. It is the same opinion held by the General Conference in 1800, the year he was ordained elder, by electing him Secretary of the General Conference, and particularly so, in choosing him to be on the committee to reply to O'Kelley's "Apology." It is very distinctly shown by the choice of Snethen, the youngest member of the committee, composed of Bruce, Roberts and Snethen, to be its spokesman. It was to deal with an issue whose gravity Asbury anxiously sensed, which called for a person equipped to meet one

of the ablest presiding elders in the Church engaged in a dissension causing cleavage. And this opinion is further attested, though there were expedient reasons also, in Asbury selecting this young itinerant for a traveling companion, and he did this knowing Snethen's leanings in matters of church government. It was not eulogistic extravagance when James M. Buckley, writing about a hundred years later, rated Nicholas Snethen "really great" and pronounced him "one of the most capable men of universal Methodism."¹

There are two faults for which he was criticized by some critics of his day. There were those who thought he at times became excited beyond a proper degree in his preaching. This occurred occasionally in his camp-meeting preaching, not in his regular pulpit efforts. Snethen, as has been described, was greatly interested in the camp meeting and believed in its usefulness and its effectiveness as a method of evangelism. He most probably made contact with it in its earlier operation and had observed the strange hypnotic phenomena sometimes present in what was commonly termed "bodily exercises." While some observers condemned these physical appearances outright, other more thoughtful persons were impressed with the unquestionable good effects that followed in the lives of many of those affected. Modern psychologists recognize the "values" and the "disvalues" in such rather strange physical occurrences. They find reasonable explanation on the basis of careful and scientific observation.² Snethen found fault with some of the early Methodist preaching because of its excessive reliance upon "feelings," and their extravagant expression. He was not inclined to monastic life, as much as Asbury, who, some thought, leaned a little to certain monastic patterns for his preachers. He was not a mystic. His religion was too practical to be lost in such concentrated state of contemplation. While not a psychologist in the modern sense, he was an observer of mental states and action beyond many of his contemporaries. In all likelihood he separated these camp-meeting manifestations into "wheat" and "chaff," and considered the former to be induced by the Spirit of God. Be-

¹ *Constitutional History of the Methodist Episcopal Church*, pp. 131, 217, James M. Buckley.

² *Psychology of Religious Mysticism*, pp. 180-183, James H. Leuba.

believing in the work of the Holy Spirit in preaching and in surrender to the unction of the Spirit to give effectiveness to the preacher's message, he may at times have become lost in the delivery of his message. Where is a brand of sound homiletics that would be so bold as to gainsay such consecrated sermonie procedure? Snethen felt that excitement, not necessarily sensational stimuli, but the arousing of attention, was an important factor in stimulating the mind to its higher attainments. The successful public speaker usually feels an inward excitement which sometimes creates certain physical effects in the presence of a waiting audience. This criticism of Snethen which has been discussed cannot be dismissed better than in the words of a Maryland Circuit Court judge: "The great excitement to which he occasionally yielded might have been objected to by some but even they could not, I am sure, have seen and heard him at such times without admiration. He was a preacher *sui generis*—the most accurate and vivid description only approximates the grand and brilliant idea which they have who have been privileged to listen to his finest efforts." ³

Fault was found with him for theorizing too much. If he were living in this atomic age presumably he would be called by his critics an ideologist. Some of his opponents, when debating the church government question, criticized him for having an over-balanced interest in sheer theory, and that he was asking the church that was succeeding to abandon the actual for the theoretical. This was not the case, but it appeared to be so to his critics. Some of his friends—J. R. Williams, for example—felt he was too visionary to fashion a workable plan of organization being evolved by the Reformers. Snethen frankly acknowledges, as was his wont, in such a matter, his habitual and eager interest in theory. When discussing Wesley's confession of his lack of theory, attributing to accident many of his plans, Snethen points out two kinds of theorists, one theorizing in anticipation only, the other upon facts and experiments, the latter being his practice. He was keenly analytic of any problem and may have been induced to give more attention to analysis than to synthesis, but he was by no

³ *Sketches of the Founders*, p. 35. T. H. Colhouer.

means devoid of constructive grasp of problems and issues. He had trained himself to search for principles in life and action, to envisage the consequences of policies and practices in operation or urged for adoption. Moreover, he was scientist enough to have discovered the importance of sound hypothesis resting on facts discovered, in order to discover truth not yet apparent. That he was not lacking in interest in practical results nor in the way to obtain them, is shown repeatedly in the course of his thinking and action, and he was too much of a statesman, too farseeing, to bring pressure for the details of a procedure before there was sufficient weight of interest and opinion to demand a detailed pattern. In other words, if the principles involved were valid he was not deeply concerned about the precise plan, believing desirable results would follow whatever was properly decided. He was willing to be silent and wait. Time and experience have demonstrated that Snethen understood what was needed in 1830 as well or better than Williams. The Methodist Episcopal Church moved through its quadrenniums for a century along the trail that Snethen and those who agreed with him had blazed. So this fault with which he was charged is not a serious one or one that can be sustained to any great degree.

Chapter Two

ACHIEVEMENTS OR ACHIEVEMENT

WHAT were his achievements? He was a scholarly, cultured person, though not adorned with university degrees, being self-educated by hard application, thorough and careful study, and wide reading. He was keen in debate, skillful and weighty in argument on the floor or on the written page. He had the grasp of a philosopher in discussing a proposition and the poise of a statesman in facing an issue with courage and patience, and a sense of timeliness in action. He possessed a chaste, ample and forceful style in speaking and writing, and was apt and versatile in illustration. He was a

foremost, if not the foremost, extemporaneous preacher of his day to all classes of people. He would not have offended a serious thinking man like Lincoln as did the renowned Peter Cartwright.

He was a strong and influential advocate, and worker, for the gradual liberation of the Negro from slavery. He urged a more intelligent and fair treatment of the American Indian. He weighed the frightful effects of intemperance upon the individual and society and discussed the problem with a scientific insight and understanding, making certain recommendatory steps in organization and effort to deal with it, strikingly similar to present-day ideas and methods. He championed the right of women to be equally educated with men. He encouraged education by example and influence, and late in life by his own personal direction and for years with an unremitting interest had appealed for a more learned ministry in Methodism. He gave an outstanding impetus to the work and rights of laymen in the Christian Church and with others who went along with him established the belief that the people could be led to govern themselves over against Asbury's belief that they must be governed. He was a great preacher of the Gospel of Christ. These and more make up his list of accomplishments.

It has become the common practice in this publicity swollen age to pile up the achievements of a person on his introduction to an audience or in presenting his name as a candidate for a position, or even in introducing him into the social circle of friends, until the ancient and noble virtue of modesty is like a shrunken and faded violet from the effort to satisfy a baited desire for the limelight. A judicial appraisal of excellence is hardly acceptable. This writer once heard Chief Justice William Howard Taft, then a member of the Yale Law Faculty, say with a chuckle, after his introduction to a packed auditorium by an eloquent political satellite, that the main trouble he found with the introduction was his inability to recognize the person being introduced. Though not without healthy ambition, and a normal self-respect and affirmation, to drag Snethen forth and leave him in a glare of competitive publicity would be disloyalty to his standards of taste and his dislike for an overweening self-importance and would do violence

to his concept of New Testament teaching on Christian equality to which he gave heed.

Perhaps our inquiry should be in the singular. What was his achievement? Possibly it is in answer to this question that true greatness is to be found in any man if there be such in him, for it includes the whole sweep of mind and heart and will in a man. It involves the moods, motives, attitudes, with the desires and volitions within him, as well as things done, that really make him what he becomes. This is an underlying and unitary matter which is more determinative of usefulness and lasting eminence than any listing of headline achievements. It is very much more important than is popularly supposed. It may not be possible to calculate in measurable terms—though some recent scientific experiments indicate that this may be realized—the destructive influence of a partisan, egotistic ill-will in a diplomatic circle, but that influence is there as an active determinant for peace or war; and the same determinative potency holds good for the leaders in a nation. The intelligent reader of American history knows that the grandeur of moral and spiritual character—let us call it—in such outstanding statesmen as Washington and Lincoln was the secret of their commanding influence and leadership, whatever eminent achievements may be listed to their credit. Nicholas Snethen's great achievement was his excellence in personal character, and in what Horace Bushnell would call his dynamic "unconscious influence" upon many people. Let us hear again the Maryland Circuit judge in his pronouncement on this point: "In private life, Mr. Snethen had, so far as I know, no superiors. Without being in the least obtrusive, he was agreeable and entertaining and knew well how to bear his part in any company in which he was found. He was most persevering in his efforts to do good,"⁴ which this man of the bench tells us was his spirit throughout his career.

Doctor George Brown made a trip with Snethen in 1834, traveling by carriage from Wheeling, West Virginia, to Georgetown, D. C. Brown had driven from west of Pittsburgh and Snethen came by boat from Louisville, Kentucky. Dr. Brown knew him, and had heard him preach. Of this trip he exclaims: "What man

⁴ Philemon B. Hooper letter, Centerville, Md., July 20, 1852. In Sprague's *Annals of the American Pulpit*, p. 251.

on earth ever had a more agreeable travelling companion?" He speaks further of his great store of information on the various subjects provoked by the circumstances of the trip; of his gentle spirit; of his logical and philosophical power; of the enriching quality of his conversation and his amusing anecdotes, and declares, "He could not be surpassed."⁵ Brown was a man of talent and habitually trusted by those who knew him to handle matters requiring judicial discernment.

Nicholas Snethen brought unending and abounding benefits to American Methodism that must not be forgot. He sought to help build with ability and zeal and an intelligent concern the Christian brotherhood among men. If he were listening in on some celestial receiving set on Wednesday morning, April 26, 1939, at the Uniting Conference in Kansas City, Missouri, he must have been made most happy by Bishop Francis J. McConnell when he led in worship that very significant and far-flung assembly of Methodist leaders, lay people and ministers. Snethen's prediction made one hundred and five years before was being fulfilled.* The Bishop prayed, saying: "Without any trace of spiritual conceit or arrogance, may we be looking upon ourselves as possessed of an inherent dignity because we are thy sons."⁶ Nicholas Snethen belonged to this world-wide family and had wrought with unusual fidelity to persuade men to become the sons of God and to act accordingly. He, too, may be likened to the tree beside the stream whose fruit comes forth in its season and whose leaf will not wither.

⁵ *Recollections of Itinerant Life*, p. 552. 1866. George Brown.

* See p. 43.

⁶ *Journal of Uniting Conference*, Kansas City, Mo. April 26, 1939.

CHRONOLOGY TABLE

Tracing the Development of the Representation Principle in Methodism of the United States, in which Nicholas Snethen had a leading part. This Table shows that more than one hundred and fifty years were necessary for the majority of Methodists in the United States to achieve a government based upon the consent of the governed.

- 1764 Robert Strawbridge.¹
- 1771 Francis Asbury arrives in America.
- 1784 Christmas Conference. Methodist Episcopal Church organized on feudal pattern.
- 1789 First Meeting of Asbury plan of "council." Plan discontinued.
- 1792 James O'Kelly agitation and secession.²
- 1800 Resolution presented for a delegated General Conference.³
- 1804 Motion for a representative General Conference lost.⁴
- 1808 New York Conference memorial requesting "a representative or delegated" General Conference. Measure considered and adopted.
- 1812 First delegated General Conference in New York City. Principle of "alternate delegate officially recognized."
- 1821 Article in Wesleyan Repository, July issue, signed "A Methodist" proposing "lay representation."⁵
- 1823 Ezekiel Cooper outlines in *Wesleyan Repository* November, Vol. III, plan for an equal number of lay delegates. Signed "A Methodist."⁶
- 1824 General Conference issues "No Such Rights" circular in reply to petition for democracy in church government. First issue of *Mutual Rights* in August following.
- 1827 Dennis B. Dorsey trial, suspension and final expulsion with others. Convention called for meeting in Baltimore of one hundred appointed delegates favoring lay representation from eight conferences.
- 1828 Reconciliation of differences proposed by Reformers in Pittsburgh Memorial, May 19, without satisfactory result.⁷

FRANCIS ASBURY'S SILVER TRUMPET

- 1828- Formation of "Associated Methodist Churches" November, 1928.
- 30 Founding of "Methodist Protestant Church" November, 1930, based upon consent of all the governed.
- 1836 Introduction of "fractional representation" in election of ministerial delegates to General Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church.
- 1843 Organization of "Wesleyan Connection" by withdrawals from Methodist Episcopal Church, chiefly over "abolition" issue, adopting equal representation of clergymen and laymen, and no episcopacy.
- 1852- Period marked by discussions of "lay rights" in Methodist Episcopal Church. Laymen organize. Conventions of laymen held in Baltimore, Philadelphia, Cincinnati and other places. Memorials go up to General Conferences asking for lay representation. Plebiscites taken to ascertain denominational public opinion.
- 70
- 1860 General Conference of Methodist Episcopal Church establishes "Standing Committee" on "lay delegation."
- 1866- Lay delegation with certain limitations approved by Methodist Episcopal Church South and a General Conference held of equal number of ministers and laymen.
- 70
- 1868 Chicago General Conference of Methodist Episcopal Church holds a two day debate upon "Lay Representation."⁸
- 1872 Committee on "Plan" for lay delegation reports to General Conference of Methodist Episcopal Church on "Plan" which is ratified. Two lay delegates from each annual conference to be elected to General Conference.
- 1877 Reunion of the Methodist Protestant Church.⁹
- 1900 Number of laymen to be elected to General Conference of Methodist Episcopal Church made equal to ministers. The words "lay members" are substituted for "laymen" in Constitution, so admitting women.
- 1912 Resolution to admit laymen into Annual Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church voted down.
- 1924 Amendment to Constitution of Methodist Episcopal Church submitted to Annual Conferences calling for admission of laymen to these bodies. Approved by majority of laymen. Voted down by ministers.¹⁰
- 1932 Laymen admitted to Annual Conferences for two days in each annual session—the "United Sessions."
- 1939 Uniting Conference of Methodist Episcopal Church, Methodist Episcopal Church South and Methodist Protestant Church. Lay-

TABLE OF CHRONOLOGY

men put on equal basis with ministers in government of The Methodist Church.

1944 Kansas City General Conference of Methodist Church refuses to admit women to full ministerial rights.

¹ Robert Strawbridge built "The Log Meeting House" according to the tablet erected in 1924 by the American Methodist Historical Society, in 1764 on Sam's Creek in Maryland, "the first Methodist Chapel in America." Strawbridge had begun preaching at his own home near what is now New Windsor, Maryland, before this. W. W. Sweet writes: "Strawbridge probably preached early as 1763 or even earlier. . . . Little doubt Strawbridge was first to 'raise up' native American preachers." ^a He may have begun preaching as early as 1760 for there is good reason to believe he lived in the John England house—the one near New Windsor, from 1760 to 1773.

Asbury wrote in his Journal (Vol. III, p. 24) in 1801, that "Mr. Strawbridge formed the first society in Maryland—and America." He bore forth the Gospel, which he had accepted from the Methodists in his native Ireland, through Maryland into Virginia, Pennsylvania and Delaware. Under his influence able preachers arose to spread the Methodist message of saving grace: Philip Gatch, William Watters, Freeborn Garrettson and others of the earliest American leaders in Methodism.

"The first real American Methodist leader" was Robert Strawbridge.^b Strawbridge was an independent itinerant and never fully yielded to the restrictions placed upon his liberty in preaching the Gospel by the official missionaries sent over by Wesley from England to direct the Methodist cause. Apparently he could not reconcile the American spirit in his breast and the experience of God's free grace in his soul, with the required acceptance of the Church of England or even John Wesley's mandate, as the only source of authority for the administration of the ordinances. Asbury recognized his sincerity and worth and made him an exceptional case, permitting him to administer the ordinances. His ashes lie near Asbury's grave in Mt. Olivet Cemetery, Baltimore, with other early Methodist leaders. Bishop Earl Cranston once facetiously observed in an address on a pilgrimage to the Strawbridge Oak, that Strawbridge was the first Methodist Protestant. He fittingly belongs in this Table.

² The right of appeal from the Bishop's appointment by a Methodist preacher was an issue championed by James O'Kelly, a successful presiding elder of Virginia. This issue became involved with the presiding elder question, that is, who should have authority to choose this official. A violent controversy and dissension were created, resulting in a secession led by O'Kelly in 1792 called the "Republican Methodist Church." This date belongs in the Table for the reason that it marks a period when the thinking of many ministers and laymen was sharpened on the subject of church government and focused on the centralized government formed at the Christmas Conference in 1784.

^a *Men of Zeal*, p. 75.

^b W. W. Sweet in *Religion on the American Frontier*, Vol. 4, p. 36. By permission of the University of Chicago Press.

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² James Tolleson "has the distinction of first moving in a General Conference (1800) a proposition for the creation of delegated conference." In this connection Neely states that Jesse Lee was the first to suggest the "idea" in the General Conference of 1792.

⁴ There appears to be some uncertainty on the question of priority of persons in introducing this measure. "Though the representative principle was not a favorite with him, the Bishop (Asbury) yielded so far to the arguments of Mr. Snethen (Nicholas Snethen) as to request him to offer the Delegated Conference Measure for the consideration of the Conference of 1804. Though the Journal of that body is silent on the subject, Mr. Snethen's reiterated statements that he did present the measure to the Conference and that it was rejected, are conclusive as to the fact."⁴

⁵ W. S. Stockton, a Methodist layman, established *The Wesleyan Repository and Religious Intelligencer* at Trenton, N. J., in February, 1821. In the July 19 issue of the paper—a very creditable publication as to appearance and caliber of contents—Stockton wrote two articles under caption "Church Government" signed "A Methodist." In "No. II" an appeal for lay delegation was made and "legislation without representation" termed "absolute power." Then followed in the August 16 issue, 1821, an article by Nicholas Snethen titled "Animadversions," inspired by Stockton's article. This blazed the way for the great debate of 1821-1828 between the conservatives and liberals on church government.

⁶ This Ezekiel Cooper plan for equal number of lay delegates and ministers in General Conference has been pronounced "clear-cut and distinctive and . . . furnished the foundation principles on which the Constitution and Discipline of the Methodist Protestant Church were subsequently built."⁶

⁷ This Pittsburgh Memorial was signed by Asa Shinn and H. B. Bascom with the signatures of Nicholas Snethen, Charles Avery and Henry Sellers, concurring. It presented a plan for reconciliation between the "radicals" and the "old side." Two specified requirements are laid upon the Reformers in this proposal for reconciliation: The eventual discontinuance of the Mutual Rights organ and of the Union Societies; it being expected that the church authorities would restore the expelled brethren. The paper closed with this sentence: "By these concessions, they are not to be understood as relinquishing their freedom of speech and of the press . . . nor of peacefully assembling for proper and justifiable purposes."⁷ The memorial was not treated fairly and in a spirit of conciliation in the judgment of the Reformers and they understood that the expelled were permanently out of the church and that the cause of lay representation in the government of the Methodist Episcopal Church was to be outlawed.

⁸ This General Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church appointed a committee "with a view to prepare a plan" for a basis of representation of ministers and laymen and provided for a plebiscite on the question.⁸

² *The Governing Conference*, p. 341. T. B. Neely.

⁴ *Sprague's Annals*, p. 216, in letter from Worthington Garrettson Snethen.

⁶ James M. Buckley has rated Ezekiel Cooper one of the church statesmen in *Methodism. History of Methodist Reform, etc.*, Vol. 2, p. 42, Edward J. Drinkhouse.

⁷ *History of Methodist Reform*, Vol. 2, pp. 160, 161. Drinkhouse.

⁸ *General Conference Journal*, Vol. 6, pp. 264, 265.

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⁹ This event belongs in this Table only because it demonstrates the social solidarity resident in the principle of Lay Representation. This is the most reasonable explanation of this early and successful reunion of two Methodist divisions caused by contention over slavery and the Civil War split.

¹⁰ Frank A. Horne in an article on Participation of Laymen in Church Government said: "All other Methodist bodies, in some form, admit laymen to their Annual Conferences. The Southern Church has just increased the lay delegation. There are fifteen such denominations throughout the world."^h

^h *New York Christian Advocate*, Sept. 9, 1826.

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Benjamin F. Thompson, in his *History of Long Island*, writes: "An extensive, salty marsh is in process of formation in Glen Cove. A sand-beach, one-half mile in length, has been formed between Long Island Sound and Crab Meadows. At Fresh Pond is a similar sand-beach. The small pond, at that place, communicates with the sea by means of a small creek, which is often filled by alluvial sands, so as to prevent the ingress of salt water. The obstruction has sometimes been removed by digging, and at other times the water rising in the pond bursts its barrier and finds its way to the ocean, removing every obstacle and making the channel deeper than before."

FROM ABSTRACTS OF WILLS ON FILE IN THE SURRO-
GATE'S OFFICE, CITY OF NEW YORK, VOL. 13, p. 280.

(*New York Historical Society*, Vol. 38)

"In the name of God, Amen.

I, Deborah Snethen, of Mosquito Cove in the Township of Oyster Bay, Queens Co., Nassau Island, being this 20th day of January 1785, weake in bodey. My Executors to sell the whole of the fast estate that I died seised of, and the money therefrom to be divided in manner following: To my grandson, John Nair £10, the remainder to be equally divided between my four grandsons, Nicholas, John, Carlton, and Gregory Snethen. My moveable estate to be divided in manner following; to my son Barak Snethen, one horse; to my grandson, John Nairn, one heffer; to my grandson John Snethen, one cow; to my grandson Charlton, one cow; all my farming utensils to my grandson Nicholas Snethen, such as waggon, plow, harrow, hoes, axes, etc. To my granddaughter, Deborah Snethen, all my household goods, that is, four beds and bedding, curtains, one cupboard, one desk, three tables, one dozen chairs, my brass, iron,

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and pewter, etc., and my weairing apperril. I make my beloved son Barak Snethen and my nephew Willet Weaks my Executors.

Witnesses: Mordecai Beedel
(of Oyster Bay, Carpenter)
Jacob Carpenter
Tillot Colwell
(of Oyster Bay, Carpenter)

Proved Queens County,
Jan. 5, 1786.

A DISCOURSE ON THE DEATH OF THE
REVEREND FRANCIS ASBURY

(Late Bishop of the Methodist Episcopal Church in the United States)

By NICHOLAS SNETHEN

A DISCOURSE

"A good Minister of Jesus Christ, nourished up in the words of faith, and good doctrine."—*I Tim. IV. 6*

The present is an occasion of much interest to the members and friends of this church. We are called today to commemorate an event, which can never again happen to us, or to our successors, in this religious fellowship. In the death of Francis Asbury, the character of our spiritual Father and Guide is consummated, and unalterably fixed—a character, which must be forever associated with the history of Methodism, in America.

He was a good minister of Jesus Christ. A good servant of the best of masters. His friends always believed him to be deserving of this encomium; his death has now fully confirmed, and established their confidence.

It may seem trite to remark, that the character in the text, is not in the highest degree; but the justness of the remark being admitted, we may proceed with our subject without seeming to be invidious of the preeminence of others. He was a good man—a good preacher—a good ruler, overseer, or Bishop.

He was made good by the grace of God. His religion was evangelical and experimental. He had repentance towards God, and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ. His repentance was not confined to the practice of sin, but extended to the nature and principle of it, which the pure and

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holy law of God, disclosed to his view in his fallen spirit. His faith was saving, and he sought justification without the deeds of the law, or the merit of works. He believed in the heart unto righteousness; his confidence in the redeemer of his soul was strong, steady, and unshaken. He was born of God, and received the spirit of adoption, which bore witness with his spirit, that he was a child of God; grace wrought effectually in him, both to will and to do. He left the first principles of the doctrine of Jesus Christ, to go on unto perfection; the perfect love which casteth out fear, was the mark of the prize of his high calling; he grew in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ; much of that clearness of perfection, and expression, for which he was remarkable, on the subject of experimental religion, proceeded, no doubt, from the strong and distinct consciousness he had of the work of God in his utmost fervour, he showed no symptoms of wildness and flightiness of imagination. He seemed to know the just bounds of religious feeling, and to possess ability to keep within them; though the subject of experience made a part of all his discourses, and he was charitable, almost to excess, of the experience of others; he rarely, if ever, dwelt upon the peculiar workings of his own heart; his heart knew its own bitterness, and strangers intermeddled not with its joy. Never perhaps has religious experience appeared in any individual, less liable to exception, or challenged more universal confidence. Who that knew the man, ever doubted the reality and sincerity of his experience? It was indeed a most edifying contrast to that mixture of spiritual and physical affections, of benevolence and selfishness, of ecstasy and melancholy, of hope and doubt, which is too often met with among professors of religion, and whose transitions, and extremes, perplex and distress us.

He was morally good. His religion was practical; he walked worthy of the vocation wherewith he was called; "his conversation was such as becometh the gospel;" he was blameless and harmless of the vices and follies of the age in which he lived. He was temperate in all things, especially in the use of lawful things, in meat, in drink, and apparel; not greedy of filthy lucre; not a lover of money, not a lover of this world; not proud. In regard to his passions, neither his friends nor his enemies had cause for pity or reproach. There is reason to believe, that at an early period, like a man of God, he submitted to the admonition, "Flee also youthful lusts." In manners he shewed uncorruptness, sincerity, gravity; he was an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in spirit. There was a manliness about his morality, which gave it a peculiar fitness to his profession and station. Nothing seemed squeamish, or sickly, in his whole moral temperament. So strong and distinct were

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the features of imitation of them. They possessed the identity of the man. His practical religion was like a galaxy, or luminous path, "shining brighter and brighter unto the perfect day."

He was a good preacher; he was a better preacher than he was generally supposed to be. The extent of his pulpit resources was not generally known. No one could know them, who was not in the habit of hearing him daily. He was master of all the science of his profession. He knew the original languages of his Bible. His mind was stored with the opinions of the most eminent biblical critics, and commentators. He was mighty in the scriptures: A workman that needed not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth. He was what is called an orthodox preacher; his faith in the divinity of the Lord Jesus Christ, never wavered. He held fast to the form of sound words that was delivered unto him. He was a practical preacher; never metaphysical or speculative; never wild and visionary; never whining and fastidious. No exception could be taken to the general purity and dignity of his language. His enunciation was excellent.

—"The clear and mellow base of his deep voice"—never failed him. In this respect he appeared to peculiar advantage, not only in the pulpit, but also in the execution of the functions of his office. Who that ever heard him in the office of ordination, say, "take thou authority," did not feel the authority of his voice? But though his pulpit exhibitions were the admiration and delight of those who heard him the most frequently; yet it must be admitted, that he was not in general so edifying to strangers. This was owing, in part, to his laconic and sententious style, and the frequent concealment of his method; and in part, also, to his natural impatience of minuteness and detail, which was always heightened by the pressure of disease. He belonged to that class of preachers, who are said to wear well; who, the oftener they are heard, the better they are liked.

He was a good Bishop—few men, possessed more of that necessary qualification for a ruler, "diligence," than he: "The care of all the churches" might be said to have "come upon him daily." His natural ability for the office was indisputable. If the saying, "he was born to govern," is true of any human being, it might be truly applied to him. Those with whom he came in contact, could not but feel the authority of his spirit. His talent was almost wholly executive; in a judicial or legislative capacity, he seemed not to excel, and hence he did not often appear to the best advantage in the chair of the conferences. He knew also the art of governing, and seldom trusted to the naked force of authority. Indeed, the majesty of command, was almost wholly concealed, or superceded by

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that wonderful faculty, which belongs to this class of human geniuses, and which enables them to inspire their own disposition for action, into the breasts of others. It cannot be concealed, that he was not incapable of the exercise of that awful attribute of power, hardheartedness to those individual personal feelings and interests, which seem to oppose the execution of public plans. Constantly in the habit of making the greatest personal sacrifices to the public good, his mind could not balance betwixt the obligation of duty, and the accommodation, or conveniency of others. He was a vigilant ruler, or overseer; he neither slumbered, nor slept upon his post. In what related to ecclesiastical men, and things, he was all eye, and ear; and what he saw and heard he never forgot. The tenacity of his memory was surprising. His knowledge of human nature was penetrating and extensive: And though on this subject, his judgment must needs have been frequently erroneous; yet, comparatively speaking, he was a good judge of men. When we affirm that he was a good Bishop, we are not ignorant how much prejudice, self-interest, and opposition of theory, we must encounter; but as the result of much careful, and even critical investigation, our judgment is deliberately made up, and we do not hesitate to declare, that as far as good intentions, good motives, and good endeavors, could conspire to make him such, he was a good Bishop; and that whatever may have been the errors of his administration, they may be accounted for, or traced to that complexity of causes, and effects, in which human transactions are so often involved, and which so frequently exceed the comprehension, or direction of the fallible human mind.

We have already intimated, that our late Bishop was our spiritual father. But as this title will be opposed, both in principle and fact, it will need illustration and proof. The opposition in principle is founded upon that well known passage of scripture, "call no man master, call no man father." Can it be true, that this prohibition is equally and in the same degree, applicable to those who were selected to be the inspired apostles of Jesus Christ; and to all succeeding ministers, and Christians? It was true of those divinely inspired men, in a secondary, as well as in a primary sense, that they had but one master and father. No man could stand between Jesus Christ and his apostles. Hence he said to them, as my father sent me, so send I you, that is, personally and immediately; so St. Paul I certify you brethren, that the gospel, which I preached unto you; I received it not from man, neither was I taught it by man, but by revelation from Jesus Christ. Now we know that God in the dispensations of his providence and grace, has not made this precedent of all those succeeding events, that have contributed to spread, or reform re-

ligion; nor placed all men in the same immediate, and personal relation to the head of the church, as his primitive apostles. On the contrary, almost all the great religious revivals, and reforms, may be traced to the instrumentality of some individual, who in a critical conjuncture of affairs, seemed to stand alone. Hence all the different denominations of Christians, look up to some leading character, as to a father, or founder. As a separate denomination of professors of religion in those United States, was not our late Bishop the father of our present order and standing, as a Methodist Episcopal Church? Not, indeed, that he was the first, or only preacher of Mr. Wesley's connection among us; but from the controlling, directing, and, in some sense, creating influence which he exercised on all critical occasions, as well as habitually, for nearly half a century. Others have labored abundantly: many have been the useful members of the body; but his was the mind to discern, and the will to command. His, too, was the pervading presence and example. His circuit has ever been the bounds of the connection. He knew personally, and by name, all the members of the annual conferences, almost from the day of their admission as probationers. From him, the travelling preachers took, as it were, the tone and pitch of their conduct; and to his authority they submitted.

It has pleased Providence, brethren, in this country, as well as in Europe, in respect to human fathers, not to leave us orphans. No possible conjecture can now be formed of the consequences, if our infant societies had been left without experience, and without a guide. As it is, Providence could hardly have been required to have done more for us. Whatever of scandal may hereafter attach to us, neither we, nor our children, shall have to bear the reproach of crimes in our human leader. Few among those who have followed in the same track, have excelled him, in any of the qualities which constitute a good man; in the union of them all, none have surpassed him.

Ambition of governing, and suspicion of disposition, will perhaps attach to his memory. The former of these may be able to maintain itself, on account of the indefinite nature of the thing. That he felt an early ambition, so to speak, of becoming a patriarch, may be allowed; though we have no positive proof of the fact; but let it be remembered, that this character, once obtained, ambition to sustain it, becomes a duty, and a virtue. An habitual dignity, and superiority, in those whom Providence has placed in the relation of fathers; is not to be classed at all with a strife among equals, who shall be the greatest.

There was a time, still within the recollection of some of our friends, when our late father was inferior, or only equal to his fellow-labourers.

That period was soon to be succeeded by another, the events of which were to give birth to a nation. In that stormy season, that crisis of political and religious affairs, when others, from fear or choice, fled to the bosom of the parent society, was he who maintained his ground, actuated by no ambition? Had he no eye to consequences? Did he act without motive, or without hope? It is hard to persuade one's self to think so. Of all the missionaries which Mr. Wesley sent to this country, might we not admit, without reproach to his memory, that the young Francis Asbury may have been the most ambitious. But if such a conjuncture of affairs, as were produced by the revolution, had not called forth, and given direction to that ambition, might it not have remained latent in his own bosom? As matters now stand, what are the fruits and effects of it? Has it not enabled him to bear the burden and heat of the day? Has it not enabled him to labour more abundantly than all his fellow missionaries? If the tree is to be known by its fruits, or a principle by its consequences, may we not infer, that an ambition productive of such efforts, could not have been of a criminal nature. No man can again stand in the same relation to the Methodist Episcopal Church as its late Bishop; we may have among us greater men, greater preachers, and greater rulers; but let them not aspire to the character of fathers; the hundreds of their equals and contemporaries will revolt at the presumption. The only lawful emulation amongst equals, is to aspire to those offices, if they have ability to fill them, in which they may become the servants of all. What St. Paul says, is true also in this respect: "Though we may have a multitude of instructors in Christ, yet not many fathers."

In regard to the charge that he was of a suspicious disposition, it might possibly have been inferred, from his well known irritability, his faculty of obtaining the most secret information, and the quickness and penetration of his genius. But though his friends were not blind to this propensity of his mind, and may have seen instances, in which they had reason to suspect its effects, yet knowing the irritating nature of his labours and affliction, they were disposed to make great allowances in his favour. Perhaps this, and other peculiarities of his character, may be at once acknowledged, and apologized for, by the admission, as fact, that he laboured beyond his strength. Nature cannot long be overdone with impunity. Had he known the art of doing less, he could have done better.

When the toilsome season of the annual conferences was over, and he entered upon the daily course of travelling and preaching, with a tolerable state of health, it was delightful to see the change which passed upon all his feelings; on such occasions, his friends found him all that they

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wished him to be. As a road-companion, no man could be more agreeable; he was cheerful almost to gaiety; his conversation was sprightly, and sufficiently seasoned with wit and anecdote. His manners and disposition, in every family, were all suavity and sweetness. The light of goodness seemed to shine around him; the eyes of all that saw him, blessed him; the young and the old emulated each other in showing him tokens of love and respect. These were seasons sacred to peace and happiness, to love and friendship; when piety, purity and humility consecrated the heart for their enjoyment. It was on one of these pleasing occasions, at the house of one of the members of a family, who had long been dear to him, in an evening party, that we recollect to have heard one of his most happy effusions; from "They shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint." The easy and sublime flight of that majestic bird, was no unfit emblem of the operations of his genius and his piety, in that charming discourse. Not only did he enliven these social intercourses, with his sermons, his prayers, and his conversations, but with psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs, which his fine voice, together with the grace of his heart, rendered peculiarly attractive. How often has he made these lines thrill through our hearts:

"Far above the glorious ceiling
Of yon azure vaulted sky,
Jesus sits, his love revealing
To his splendid troops on high."

And again,

... "I cannot forbear
These passionate longings for home;
O! when will my spirit be there,
O! when will the messenger come?"

The Bishop may be forgotten, or faintly remembered; but evergreens will grow and bloom perennial around the memory of the man, the Christian, and the able minister of the new testament.

The last particular, worthy of notice, that has been urged to disadvantage, is connected with the memorable General Conference of 1792. The secession of one man on that occasion, gave rise to "an apology" for that final and decisive step, in which abundance of censure is cast upon "Francis," as he is called. But neither the former standing of the writer, nor his complaint of cruel treatment by the Bishop, nor his warning voice against spiritual tyranny and oppression, could gain him more

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than one final proselyte and follower, out of the travelling connection.

It now remains to give an outline, embracing in a chronological order, some of the particulars of his life and death, and hasten to our closing remarks. He was born near Birmingham, in England, in the year 1745. His parents seem not to have belonged to the wealthy class of European society; his mother died within the present century. While she lived, he was in the habit of sending her a yearly remittance; whenever he had occasion to speak of her, he manifested the utmost reverence and respect, and would sometimes add among his friends, that besides the duty he owed to his mother, as a child, he believed it to be the duty of every man, to support one woman. His education appears not to have differed from that which is generally obtained at country schools. He became a professor of religion, and began to exercise his gift in public, before he attained the age of manhood. Having gone through the usual grades of class-leader, exhorter, local preacher, and probationer, in the travelling connection, with acceptableness and usefulness, he offered himself as a missionary to America, and was accepted by Mr. Wesley, and the conference. He arrived at the point of his destination, and the scene of his future labours, in the year 1771, and about the 26th year of his age. Until the war of the revolution broke out, his labours were mostly confined to the parts of the country between New York and Baltimore. During the war, he acted as far as circumstances would allow, as general superintendent over those societies, not included within the lines occupied by the British armies. At the return of peace, we find the powers of his mind in their most enlarged and vigorous state of exercise. By this time his travels seem to have extended through Delaware, Maryland, Virginia, and North Carolina; and his ministry must have been abundantly successful, as no inconsiderable number of the most aged and respectable members of the societies, in these parts, professed to owe their conversion, in whole, or in part, to his instrumentality. If those whom we have had the happiness of knowing, are a specimen of the rest, few preachers have been more honoured in the characters of their professed converts. In nothing did he manifest so much concern and sensibility as for the success of his labours. When he came to the knowledge of any instance in which he had been useful to an individual, it was impossible for him to conceal the joy and exultation of his heart; nor was this at all surprising to those who knew how much his soul was set upon this work, and how fervently and constantly he prayed, as well as laboured for the salvation of men.

In the year 1784, he was chosen by the conference, in conformity to the nomination of Mr. Wesley, as one of the general superintendents, or

Bishops, of the then newly organized Methodist Episcopal Church, and was ordained to that office in the City of Baltimore. From that time he continued to travel, and visit all the conferences annually, with one or two occasional interruptions, from affliction. In the course of a few years after the return of peace, the bounds of the connection were greatly enlarged on all sides, and his official labours were prodigiously increased. Meanwhile the division of power, and the constitutional limits of authority remained imperfect. Matters seemed to be tending to a crisis, when the happy expedient of a General Conference was adopted. Though the course pursued by the conference, became the pretext for the division which followed; yet the good effects of its meeting were extensively realized, especially in preserving the preachers from the spirit of division, and giving them a knowledge and confidence in their own strength and importance. The subsequent meeting of this body, once in four years, enabled him to draw from them such expressions of approbation, as amounted, in effect, to a kind of indirect and periodical re-election; and has served to strengthen the bonds of affection and confidence between him and the connection at large.—During the interval betwixt the years 1784 and 1796, the cares and anxieties of office, occasionally, perhaps, pressed the most heavily upon him; his mind seems to have been alarmed frequently with the apprehension of innovations and revolutions. How far these fears were well founded, we have no data to determine; though, from the high encomium we have heard him pay to the docility and subordination of disposition in the American preachers and people, we should think that they rather exceeded the magnitude of the danger. But for the last twenty years, he has had but little cause for fighting without, or fears within, except what originated from mere personal and local difficulties. The general state of the connection has been as tranquil and as prosperous as could be reasonably expected.

His constitution was naturally delicate. For many years he was subjected to the asthma, and inflammatory affections. At one time his nervous system became greatly relaxed, and was, perhaps, never afterwards wholly restored; he had also his full share in those diseases which prevail in certain parts of our country; he was no stranger to fevers and agues, bilious fevers, etc., etc. Finally, his almost worn-out constitution yielded to the fatal consumption.

The approximate cause of this disease seems to have been the influenza, with which he was taken, in South Carolina, about Christmas 1815; and which was epidemic through the country. It was followed by an almost entire loss of appetite, and the formation of ulcers on his lungs. During the course of the winter, he continued to make efforts to meet the General

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Conference. Having reached Richmond, in Virginia, he preached his last sermon in that city, in the old Methodist meeting house, at three o'clock, in the afternoon, Sunday, March 24. John Wesley Bond, his traveling companion, and other friends, endeavoured to dissuade him from the attempt, but he replied, that God had given him a work to do, and that he must once more deliver his testimony in that place. Br. Bond and others, took him in their arms, and carried him from his carriage door, to the pulpit, and placed him on a table. He spoke for near an hour, from Rom. IX. 28, with much feeling and effect, pausing at intervals to recover breath; and was taken back to his carriage in the same manner. On Tuesday, Thursday and Friday following, he traveled, and reached the house of his old friend and host, Mr. George Arnold. On Saturday, he intended to have gone on to Fredericksburg, about 20 miles, but the weather proved too inclement. In the course of the day, overhearing Br. Bond and the family, conversing about an appointment for meeting, he observed, that they need not be in a hurry. A remark so unusual, gave Br. Bond much uneasiness. Towards evening, he became greatly indisposed. The swelling in the hands and feet increased, and began to extend to the body; other symptoms were equally afflictive and alarming. That night, Mr. Arnold's grandson offered his services, that Br. Bond might have an opportunity to sleep. About three o'clock, he desired that Br. Bond might be called to him; and observed, that he had passed a night of great bodily suffering. Br. Bond proposed sending for a physician, but he would yield to no entreaties; adding, finally, that before the Doctor could get there, his breath would be gone. In answer to Br. Bond's inquiry, he told him he had no farther communication to make, having fully expressed his mind, in his addresses to the Bishop and General Conference. About eleven o'clock, he inquired if it was not time for meeting; but, recovering his recollection he desired that the family be called together. Br. Bond sung, prayed and expounded the 21st of Revelation. Throughout the exercise, he appeared to be recollected and much engaged in devotion. At the close, his mind again seemed to fail a little, and he wished Br. Bond to explain as usual, the nature of a subscription, which he used to offer for the assistance of poor preachers and missionaries, etc., etc. Then they offered him a little barley water, but he was unable to swallow, and his speech began to fail. Observing the agony of Br. Bond's distress, he raised his hand and looked joyfully at him. Br. Bond then asked him if he felt the Lord Jesus Christ to be precious? He seemed to exert all his remaining strength, and raised both his arms, as a token of triumph; and in a few minutes after, as he sat in his chair, with his head supported by Br. Bond's hand, without a struggle, he breathed his last, on Sabbath, the 31st day

of March, 1816, in the 71st year of his age. Mark the perfect man! behold the upright! for the end of that man is peace.

In making up a judgment upon his character and labours; the circumstances of his birth, education, constitutional temperament, and afflictions, should not be lost sight of. A youth, who is not admitted into the society of the graces, and the sciences, and who claims no citizenship in their republic, ought not to be amenable to the decision of their tribunal. Mr. Asbury was self-taught; not indeed in a hermit's cell; not in a state of seclusion from society; he made no sacrifice of his pulpit, or public duties, to his book. It would be hazarding little, to say, that he never lost an opportunity to preach, in the pursuit of knowledge. When we deduct the time taken up in travelling, preaching, and superintending the general work, and those intervals when a cute or chronic disease disqualified him for study, we are led to wonder when he could have found time to improve his mind; but improve it he certainly did; and in no common degree; for though he made no public profession of learning, politeness, or elocution, he used, incidentally, to give his friends some choice specimens of those qualifications. Perhaps he was conscious, that their principles were not sufficiently radicated, by education, to enable him to make such a public and professed display of them, as would bear the severe eye of criticism. But in devotion, he affected no concealment; he was professedly, and habitually, devout. In this part of his character, there was nothing doubtful. Devotion raised him above himself, and obscured his infirmities. His prayers, on all occasions, in the estimation of his friends, exceeded any compositions of the kind they had either heard or read; while they had all the perspicuity of studied written discourse, they seemed to possess the fitness of inspiration to the persons, and subjects, for whom they were offered up. Those who heard him daily, were surprised and delighted with his seemingly inexhaustible fund of devotional matter. It is difficult to conceive how any man could come nearer up to the precept, "pray without ceasing."

The death of this good man, we have seen, corresponded with the expectations his holy and laborious life had raised in the minds of his friends; and it is a great additional consolation to find, not only that his end was peaceful, but that providence, in this dispensation, has neither perplexed our reason, nor put any new trial upon our faith. Nor can we scarcely express a wish that the time, place, and circumstances, had been otherwise than they were. Death, at the age of seventy-one, cannot be complained of as premature; he must be sanguine indeed, who, at that advanced age, can calculate upon plans of great future usefulness. To his active spirit, confinement would have been insupportable. To go, and to

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live, were with him synonymous terms. Such heroic souls, have no point of glory, short of "dying in the field of battle." We are not ignorant that the object of all his efforts, and wishes, was once more to meet the General Conference; but had he succeeded, and died in its very bosom, it is doubtful whether the story of his death had been half so impressive. And have we not seen enough of the pomp and pageantry of funerals, to convince us that their effect on the living is not much greater than on the dead. The mortal remains of our venerable friend were not given to dogs and ravening fowls a prey;—nor whelmed in the fishy deep;—neither are they in the hands of the infidels, but have found Christian burial.

We cannot conclude, without being led to a review of the past, and to some feeling of anxiety for the future. It is now about fifty years since the introduction of Methodism into this country, and into this neighborhood;* within that period, hundreds of preachers have been raised up, and by their labours and travels, have pervaded the elder states, and almost kept pace with the rapid and widely extending emigration to new settlements. Hitherto, no considerable division has taken place among the preachers; one creed, one system of doctrine, and one book of discipline, serves the whole connection. We are yet all as one body, even as we were called. Now, for the first time, the General Conference is left without the presence of him, under whose auspices it has been raised to its present eminence. Since providence has judged us to be of age, and taken our father from us, shall we have wisdom and grace enough to preserve the unity of the spirit, in the bonds of peace? Much, perhaps, will depend upon a just appreciation of the character of our American Apostle. He has left us a precious example, in his holy and useful life, and ministry; but is it not to be feared that men may be found, who will take his example too extensively; who will not consider that difference of circumstances may render the same transaction lawful and praiseworthy in one man, and criminal and reproachful in another. Deprived, as the family is, of the parent, let the children endeavour to supply the loss, by their united wisdom and brotherly love.

(The following letter did not come to hand until the preceding discourse was composed. The value of its contents in the estimation of Snetben, has induced him to give it in the original form, excepting those parts which related to himself, in preference "to new modeling of the discourse, in order to embrace it.")

* Linganore, Frederick County, Maryland, May 3, 1816.

"DEAR BROTHER:

"I know of no means more certain by which to form a just estimate of the character of our late venerable Bishop, than the knowledge of those circumstances which your memory will supply, and those which his own record furnishes in his manuscript Journal. He thus observes of himself:

"I was born in Old England near the foot of Hampstead Bridge, in the parish of Handsworth, about four miles from Birmingham, in Staffordshire; and, according to the best of my after knowledge on the 20th or 21st day of August, in the year of Our Lord 1745. My father's name was Joseph, and my mother's, Elizabeth Asbury; they were people in common life, remarkable for honesty and industry, and had all the comforts of plenty about them:—had my father been as careful and provident as he was laborious, he might have been wealthy. As it was, it was his providence to be employed as a farmer and gardner, by the two richest families in the neighborhood. My parents had but two children, a daughter and myself; my sister died in infancy. From my childhood, I may say, I have neither dar'd an oath, nor hazarded a lie. The love of truth is not natural; but the habit of telling it I acquired very early, and so well was I taught, that my conscience would never permit me to swear profanely. I learned from my parents a certain form of words for prayer; and I well remember, my mother strongly urged my father to family reading and prayer; the singing of psalms was practiced by them both. I abhorred mischief and wickedness, although my mates were amongst the vilest of the vile for lying, swearing, fighting, and whatever else boys of their age and evil habits were likely to be guilty of. From such society I very often returned home uneasy and melancholy. Sometimes I was much ridiculed, and called Methodist parson, because my mother invited any people who had the appearance of religion to her house. I was sent to school early, and began to read the bible at between six and seven years of age, greatly delighting in the historical parts of it. My school-master was a churl, and beat me cruelly: this drove me to prayer; and it appeared to me, that God was very near to me. My father, having but one son, greatly desired to make me keep at my books; he cared not how long; but in this design he was disappointed; for my master, by his severity, had filled me with such horrible dread, that, with me, every thing was preferable to going to school. I lived some time in one of the wealthiest and most ungodly families we had in the parish; here I became vain, but not openly wicked. Some months after this, I came home and made my choice, when about thirteen years and a half old, to learn a branch of business, to which I served, and at which I wrought about six years and a half. During this time I enjoyed great liberty, and in the

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family was treated more like a son, or an equal, than an apprentice. Soon after I entered on that business, God sent a pious man (not a Methodist) into our neighbourhood, and my mother invited him to our house; by his conversation and prayers, I was awakened before I was quite fourteen years of age; it was now easy and pleasing to leave my company, and I began to pray morning and evening, being drawn by the cords of love as with the bands of a man. I went to West-Bromich church: here I heard Ryland, Stillingfleet, Talbot, Bagnall, Mansfield, Hawes and Venu—great names, and esteemed to be Gospel Ministers. I became very serious, reading a great deal, as Whitfield and Cennicks sermons, and indeed, every good book I could meet with. It was not long before I began to inquire of my mother who, where and what were the Methodists; she gave me a favourable account, and directed me to a person that could take me to Wednesbury to hear them. The people appeared very devout, men and women kneeling down—saying amen. Now behold they were singing hymns—sweet sound! Why, strange to tell, the preacher had no prayer-book; and yet he prayed wonderfully! What was yet more extraordinary, the man took his text, and had no sermon book: thought I, this is wonderful indeed! 'Tis certainly a strange way, but it is the best way. The preacher talked about confidence, assurance, etc., of which all my flights and hopes fell short. I had no deep convictions, nor had I committed any deep known sins. At one sermon, some time after, my companion was powerfully wrought on: I was exceedingly grieved that I could not weep like him; yet I knew myself to be in a state of unbelief. On a certain time when I was praying in my father's barn, I believe the Lord pardoned my sins, and justified my soul; but my companions reasoned me out of this sentiment, and I gave up my confidence, and that for months; yet I was happy—free from guilt and fear, and had power over sin. Some time after I had obtained a clear witness of my acceptance, the Lord showed me in the heyday of youth and youthful blood, the evil of my heart: for a short time I enjoyed, as I thought, the pure and perfect love of God, but this happy frame of mind did not long continue, although at seasons I was greatly blest. Some others, with myself met for reading and prayer, and we had large and good meetings, and were much persecuted, until the persons at whose house we held them, being frightened, they were discontinued. I then held meetings, frequently, at my father's house, exhorting the people there, as also at Sutton Colfield, and several souls professed to find peace through my labours. I met class awhile at Bromwich Heath, and met in band at Wednesbury. I had preached some months before I publicly appeared in the Methodist Meeting Houses: when my labours became more extensively witnessed, some were amazed,

not knowing how I had exercised elsewhere. Behold me now a local preacher, the humble and willing servant of any and of every preacher that called on me by night, or by day, being ready, with hasty steps, to go far and wide to do good; visiting Derbyshire, Staffordshire, Warwickshire, Worcestershire and indeed almost every place within my reach for the sake of precious souls, preaching generally three, four and five times a week. I think I was between twenty-one and two when I gave myself up entirely to God and his work, after acting as a local preacher nearly five years. Whilst I traveled in England I was much tempted, finding myself extremely ignorant of almost everything a minister of the Gospel ought to know.'

"He landed in Philadelphia on the 27th of October, 1771, and immediately began his labours. On Tuesday, the 13th he preached in New York. Early in November, 1772, he came into Maryland. On Saturday evening, the 28th of November, he first preached at Fell's Point, in Baltimore. Until 1784, Mr. Asbury held his authority, whatsoever it might be, from Mr. Wesley. At the General Conference, held in Baltimore, in the December of that year, Dr. Coke and himself were unanimously elected Superintendents of the Methodist Church in America, by his ordination on the 27th of the same month, made Episcopal. It would appear that Bishop Asbury had laboured in England, as a local and travelling preacher, about ten years; in America upwards of forty-four years, nearly thirty-two of which he, as Bishop, held the Superintendency. When we count the thousands throughout this widely-extended continent, who, with affectionate veneration, owned him as their spiritual father, we may question if a weightier charge has been committed to any man since the days of the Apostles; and when the record of his life shall meet the public eye, who, that patiently examines and candidly decides, will be bold enough to say, that since that time, duties so great and so various have been by any one man more faithfully performed. Here I may stop: your own intimate knowledge of his history makes further information unnecessary. I will, however, indulge my present feelings by making one remark: An opinion is too prevalent with some good people, that Bishop Asbury was an austere, cold, proud man, almost incapable of friendship. How falsely they judge, who thus think, let his friends say. And are there none in the neighborhood of Pipe Creek, who have witnessed the delightful efforts of his social disposition—who felt the warmth, and have proved the constancy of his attachments: I know there are.

Your affectionate Brother,

Francis Hollingsworth"

P.S.: Mr. Asbury's journals are in Mr. Hollingsworth's possession.

BIOGRAPHIES

JAMES R. WILLIAMS was a successful businessman of Baltimore, a dyer, and a licensed local preacher of the Methodist Episcopal Church. He is credited with possessing a "rare judgment in counsel." He was conversant with Hebrew, Greek, Latin, French—early Methodist preachers adored the dead languages—a student of the physical sciences, and expressed himself in "vigorous English style." He was one of the outstanding writers for Methodist Reform. He represented the group that adhered strongly to Methodist usages and ways, with only such changes as were made necessary by the adoption of lay representation. He wrote a *History of the Methodist Protestant Church* in 1843. He was a dependable thinker and writer.¹

ANCEL H. BASSETT was born in Massachusetts and was brought by his parents while an infant to Cincinnati, Ohio, where he united with the Methodist Episcopal Church when he was twelve years old. He joined the Reformers before he was twenty, and became prominent in their early organization in Ohio. He was for a long time active in editorial capacity, and for another period publisher, in all of which positions he was successful, being a "painstaking and able writer" and a wise executive. "He was punctilious, accurate . . . and he has done much to preserve to the Church the olden records."²

ANDREW ADGATE LIPSCOMB was born at Georgetown, District of Columbia, 1816, and died in 1890 in the south where he had spent his life after 1842. He was a leader in female education in Alabama, and a successful administrator in this field. He was for fourteen years Chancellor of the University of Georgia in the critical Civil War period, and exercised a strong influence upon citizens and students. He became known as a student of the fine arts, an authority on Shakespeare, and a lecturer and writer in these and other fields; "His writings and lectures establishing his reputation for culture and learning throughout the country."³ He

¹ See Edward J. Drinkhouse's *History of Methodist Reform*, Vol. 2, p. 358. Also Colhouer's *Founders*, pp. 174, 448.

² *Ibid.* pp. 630, 448.

³ *The South in History and Literature*, Rutherford.

was among the first men invited to join the Faculty of Vanderbilt University, and his name was listed on the register of Vanderbilt University in the field of Philosophy and Criticism from 1875 to 1884. Professor Edwin Mims writes in his *History of Vanderbilt* in 1946 that Lipscomb lectured one spring term on "Laws of Thought"—"designed to be a practical application of intellectual philosophy to the operation of the mind."⁴ He lectured also on Shakespeare, *Paradise Lost*, and the Raphael Cartoons. He was a contributor to various magazines and papers, and was one of the paid writers of *Harpers*. The New York *Independent* referred to him as "one of the most brilliant writers of the south." "Refined of manners, cultivated in taste, pure and unselfish in emotions, he was universally honored and beloved."⁵

He wrote a series of articles on Nicholas Snethen after retirement at Athens, Georgia, which were republished in the *Methodist Protestant* in July and August, 1880, under the title "One of the Grand Old Fathers."

⁴ *History of Vanderbilt University*, Edwin Mims.

⁵ *Ibid.* Permission given by Vanderbilt University Press.

JOURNAL OF THE FOURTH GENERAL CONFERENCE OF THE METHODIST PROTESTANT CHURCH

CINCINNATI, OHIO. MAY, 1846.
AFTERNOON SESSION, MAY 19TH.

.....

Dr. Waters* offered the following preamble and resolutions which were unanimously adopted by rising vote—

"NICHOLAS SNETHEN

"WHEREAS, in the dispensation of an allwise and gracious Providence, this great and good man of God, since last session of the General Conference, has been called away from labors of time to the rewards of eternity, and whereas, it behooves this conference, in the recollection of his many and eminent virtues, to take some appropriate and respectful notice of his worthy and estimable character, therefore,

"*Resolved*, 1. That in the opinion of this General Conference, the late Rev. N. Snethen, for power and originality of intellect, fullness of literary and theological attainments, ability and accomplishments as a writer, and effectiveness and spiritual unction as a preacher, he seems to rank amidst the first and most distinguished lights of the American pulpit.

"*Resolved*, 2. That his deep and consistent piety as a Christian, and his many personal and refined accomplishments as a gentleman, beaming out, as they did, with a uniform, and steady lustre in all his religious and social intercourse, were strikingly impressive and beautiful, and shall be faithfully reposed in our fondest recollections.

"*Resolved*, 3. That the name of *N. Snethen* Yet lives—can never die—and is an endearing monument of priceless value to his beloved and sorrowing children, to whom above all others, he was most dear, and also a treasure of inestimable worth, ever to be preserved, and regarded with a common and filial respect and solicitude, by the whole church for whose welfare and prosperity he continued to labor to the end of his life, with an unwearied zeal and affection.

"*Resolved*, 4. That these resolutions, by request of the conference be published in the *Methodist Protestant*, and in the other periodicals of the church."

* Francis Waters, 1792-1868. President of General Conference, 1846.

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